

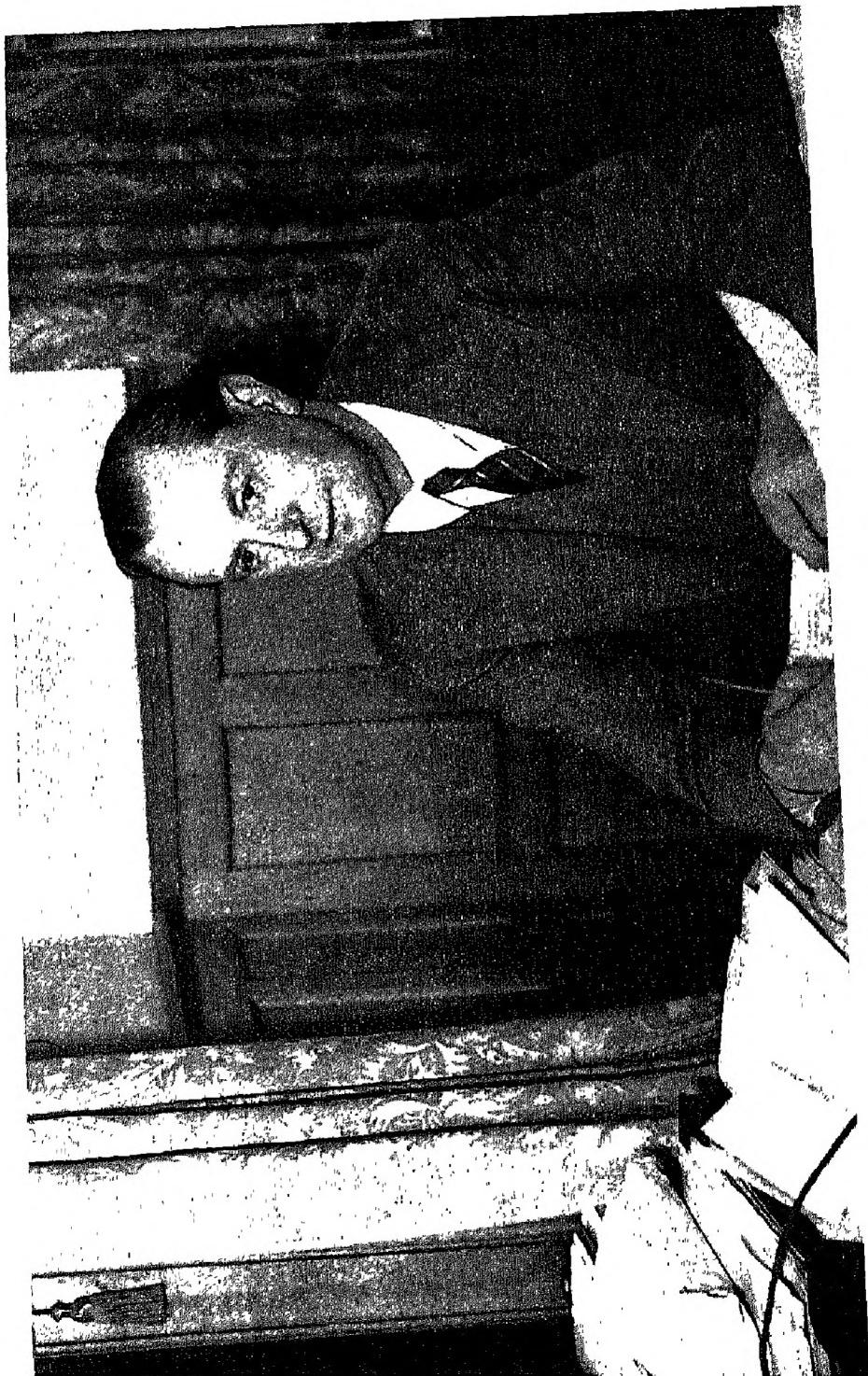


# THE WAR OF 1939

VOLUME IV

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# THE WAR OF 1939

A HISTORY DEALING WITH EVERY PHASE OF THE  
WAR ON LAND, SEA, AND IN THE AIR, INCLUDING  
THE EVENTS WHICH LED UP TO THE OUTBREAK  
OF HOSTILITIES

EDITED BY

GEOFFREY DENNIS, M.A. (OXON)



VOLUME IV

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## PREFATORY NOTE

THIS present—the fourth—volume of *THE WAR OF 1939* deals with the half-year period from June 1st, 1940, to November 30th, 1940.

The major features of the period are the Fall of France, and the continuance of the War—against Germany's hope and perhaps expectation—against the British Empire alone (Chapter I) ; the waging of that war, most intensively during this period from the air, in the Battle of Britain (Chapter III), which was almost as decisive (in its indecisiveness) one way as the Battle of France had been in the other ; and Italy's intervention, with the opening up of Africa and the Mediterranean to hostilities (Chapter IV). These features are those to which, rightly, the most attention is given in the chapters that follow.

The naval aspect, as always important, if not during these months of the chief importance, is fully dealt with (Chapter II) ; also the general diplomatic outline of the period (Chapter V).

Finally, there is a general review (in Chapter VI) of the early stages of the great effort put forward on our side by the British Dominions and Colonies.

GEOFFREY DENNIS.



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C H A P T E R   I  
NAVAL OPERATIONS  
BY REAR-ADmiral H. G. THURSFIELD

THE NORWEGIAN CAMPAIGN

IN Volume III the withdrawal of the Allied forces from Narvik and its neighbourhood at the beginning of June was recorded in the military section, but the unfortunate episodes which occurred at sea in the course of the withdrawal were not mentioned in the naval section, since they did not occur until the second week of June. Very few details of what actually occurred have been made public in this country, and it is therefore not possible to give here more than an outline.

On June 8th H.M.S. *Glorious*, aircraft carrier, accompanied by the destroyers *Acasta* and *Ardent*, had just left Norwegian waters in the vicinity of Narvik to return to this country when she encountered a strong German squadron consisting of the battle-cruiser *Scharnhorst* and other ships ; one of these may have been her sister-ship *Gneisenau*—though since the Germans had gone out of their way to announce that both ships were there, it seems perhaps unlikely. According to the German account, the *Glorious* was unable to get her aircraft into the air before she was disabled by German fire, which also prevented her developing a high enough speed to get away. The *Acasta* and *Ardent* made smoke screens to protect her and at once attacked with torpedoes, but their attacks were unsuccessful and one of them was sunk by concentrated fire. The *Glorious* then came under fire again, and was set on fire and sunk, and finally the other destroyer shared the fate of her consorts, firing her guns to the end. By some mischance, of which no explanation has been published, none of the *Glorious*'s signals got through, so that the Admiralty were in ignorance of what had happened, except that, since it proved impossible to get into communication with them, the three ships must have been sunk. The empty transport *Orama* and the tanker *Oil Pioneer* were sunk at the same time, though whether by the same German

## NAVAL OPERATIONS

force or by another is not known. There were, however, no casualties to the ships which at the same time were bringing away the Allied troops from Narvik, all of whom were landed safely in Britain.

Thirty-six officers and men from the *Glorious* were picked up by a Norwegian ship and later landed in this country. The German announcements implied that there were some hundreds of survivors, but how many they picked up is not known. The same bad weather and poor visibility which prevented British ships and aircraft from sighting the enemy squadron also prevented them from sighting the other rafts of the *Glorious*, though they are believed to have passed quite close to them.

The further movements of the enemy are not known, but three days later aircraft of the Coastal Command attacked a German force which they had located in Trondheim and reported having hit two cruisers and a transport with bombs, for the loss of two of their number; both A.A. fire and fighter opposition were severe. At dawn on June 13th, Skuas of the Fleet Air Arm attacked in their turn and reported one hit on the *Scharnhorst* with a heavy bomb abaft the funnel and possibly another hit; the exact composition of the enemy forces there was not reported, but it would seem that part of the force first bombed must have left by then. The damage to the *Scharnhorst*, however, seems to have kept her there for another week, and meanwhile British submarines kept watch outside.

At 10 p.m. on June 20th, H.M.S. *Clyde*, patrolling off the exit from Trondheim in very heavy weather, sighted two large men-of-war putting to sea escorted by destroyers. Unable to get in close, she fired her torpedoes at long range and heard one of them hit; but she was prevented by counter-attack from observing the result. A few hours later, at dawn, torpedo aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm attacked the *Scharnhorst*—definitely identified this time—but succeeded only in hitting one of the escorting destroyers. An hour later bombers of the Coastal Command claimed three direct hits on her, but German fighters working from Stavanger as protective escort reinforced the ship's own A.A. fire and five British aircraft were lost in these two attacks. Thick weather which came on shortly afterwards enabled her to escape further observation and the Home Fleet ships sent to engage her failed to make contact. She was next seen in the floating dock at Kiel when the dockyard there was attacked by the Bomber Command on July 1st. The attacks were repeated on six other nights in July and on four in August, and hits were reported both on the floating dock and the ship herself, but it seems

doubtful if the hits were really made. Certainly none of the photographs of Kiel from the air, which were published by the Air Ministry some months later, gave convincing evidence of damage such as should have been apparent if the ship had been hit.

That was the end of the Norwegian campaign proper, and it left Germany in undisputed possession of the whole of Norway. But it also left her more than ever dependent on sea communications—for most of Norway has none other—and with a seriously depleted fleet. About half the cruisers and more than half the destroyers with which she began the war had now been sunk—the losses cannot be stated with precision, since it was her settled policy to conceal them—but on the other hand the possession of Norway's sheltered waterways running right up into the Arctic greatly simplified her task of getting warships, or other ships destined to act as ocean raiders, out to sea unobserved. British submarines and aircraft continued throughout the following months to demolish stores of fuel oil and to sink German supply ships and transports that were moving in Norwegian waters. On July 6th it was described how H.M.S. *Snapper* had torpedoed two German supply ships or transports in one convoy there and three in another. On August 1st the Fleet Air Arm destroyed a radio station at Bergen which was known to be in use by the Germans, and sank a supply ship in the harbour. On July 7th and August 8th and 28th the oil installation at Dolvik, near Bergen, was completely destroyed; on August 19th two transports were sunk by bomb attack; another one and a naval patrol boat were sunk on August 28th. On September 2nd H.M. submarine *Sturgeon*, when on patrol off the Skaw, encountered a large German transport guarded by a number of destroyers steering north—towards Norway. The enemy was only just within range, and she would not have been sighted at all but that she was silhouetted against a sunset sky; however, the *Sturgeon* sank her with a torpedo, with the result, according to a Swedish report, that only 100 out of the 4,000 troops she carried were saved. On October 12th another transport in convoy was hit; on October 19th and 20th torpedo and bomb attacks were made on the seaplane base at Tromsö, in the extreme north.

#### THE WITHDRAWAL FROM FRANCE

Some of the British troops brought away from Dunkirk were quickly re-transferred to France south of the Somme and rejoined those of the British forces which were still in company with the French armies

## NAVAL OPERATIONS

south of the German break-through. As the tide of battle swept southwards, operations similar to the withdrawal from Dunkirk but much smaller in scale had to be conducted at a number of places along the French coast, but one cannot yet give any connected account of them. At the Channel ports, and still more at the Atlantic ports, it was not possible to provide the protection by fighter aircraft which had been available at Dunkirk, the distances from British aerodromes being too great ; the result was that there were rather more casualties from air attack in proportion during withdrawal. Some months afterwards the circumstances of the loss on June 17th of the *Lancastria*, transport, at St. Nazaire were made public. Being a big ship, she had to lie 5 miles off the harbour while troops and refugees were brought out to her in tenders. She had just finished loading and was about to leave with some 5,000 troops and 50-60 civilian refugees on board when she was attacked by German bombers and hit by at least three large bombs. The casualties from the bombs themselves were heavy in the crowded ship, and the damage was such that she sank almost immediately. Only about half of those on board were saved and brought away in other ships.

It was on the day that the *Lancastria* was sunk that Marshal Pétain asked for an armistice, and within a few days after that, practically the whole of the B.E.F. remaining in France who could reach the coast had been brought away. The casualties amongst men-of-war were fortunately few, the only one lost being the Canadian destroyer H.M.C.S. *Fraser*, sunk not in action with the enemy but in collision in the Gironde river during the final stages of the evacuation. After the German occupation of northern France, landings on the French coast were made by small parties from England, by whom a certain number of casualties were inflicted on the enemy and valuable information obtained. One of these operations was announced towards the end of June, but without details ; and if these small combined operations were repeated, nothing was said about them.

## THE FRENCH NAVY

With the collapse of France, the question of what was to happen to the French Navy became one of great concern to this country. In any case, its collaboration seemed likely to be lost to us, and as Italy had just been added to our enemies, the calls on the British Navy would be greater than ever. If at the same time the French Navy were to fall into the hands of the Germans and so replace all the ships they had so

recklessly thrown away in the Norway adventure, the outlook for us would be grave ; it had become urgent to provide against that as far as was practicable. Every effort was made by British liaison officers, as the Germans came nearer and nearer to Cherbourg, Brest, Lorient, and the other Atlantic naval ports, to persuade the French to bring their ships away, preferably to British ports, or failing them to French North African ports. There was great reluctance on the part of French officers to do this, but eventually they recognized the necessity, and by the time the Germans reached the ports, nothing that could be brought away remained, and what had to be left was blown up. Two of the older battleships, two light cruisers, eight destroyers, a number of submarines, and over 200 sloops, mine-sweepers, and other minor warships came to British ports. The new battleship *Richelieu*, which had just been completed for service, went to Dakar. Her sister-ship, *Jean Bart*, which was believed to be completed except for her armament, went, it was believed, to Casablanca. The rest of the fleet, which was in the Mediterranean, went to Bizerta, Algiers, and Oran, and there was at Alexandria the French contingent of the Mediterranean Fleet under Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham.

The German armistice terms were made known on June 23rd, and the Italian terms two days later. By the former, all ships of the French Navy were to return to their home ports, where they would be disarmed under German and Italian control. Although there was attached to this condition a "solemn declaration" by Germany that she did not intend to use the French ships for her own war purposes, that, of course, was quite valueless in British eyes. The armistice negotiations dragged on day after day without definite news of what was actually going to be done—France's previous assurances to Britain seemed to make it inconceivable that action so actively harmful to her late ally could really be taken, even in the stress of national defeat, but her recent release of the captured German air pilots could not be forgotten in this country. Eventually the British Government felt itself forced to take action, to provide—as far as lay in its power—against the danger of the French fleet becoming available to Germany.

Accordingly, on the morning of July 3rd, all the French men-of-war in British ports were taken into British control, French officers and men being accommodated ashore for the time being. They were offered the alternative of continuing the war in collaboration with Britain, in which case the British Government undertook to ensure their pay and

## NAVAL OPERATIONS

maintenance, or of returning to France ; in any case, the French warships which survived the war would be handed back to France. The transfer of control was effected smoothly—except for an unfortunate misunderstanding in the submarine *Surcouf*, which led to a scuffle in which Commander Sprague, R.N., and one French officer lost their lives—the French officers recognizing that they had no alternative but to submit to overwhelming force. About half of them joined the Free French forces under General de Gaulle and Vice-Admiral Muselier, to whom as many of their ships as they could man were handed over. The remainder were repatriated as soon as the Vichy Government had made the necessary arrangements.

The first attempt to repatriate them provided an object-lesson in the sort of consideration they had to expect from Germany. On July 24th the French liner *Meknes*, clearly marked with French colours which were brilliantly illuminated after dark, sailed from Southampton carrying 1,300 French naval officers and seamen, two women, and a child. Her departure had been notified to the Germans from Vichy, but at 10.30 p.m. she was fired on by an E-boat—a German motor torpedo boat—with machine-guns. The *Meknes* at once stopped engines and signalled her name and occupation by lamp, but was sunk by a torpedo from the E-boat before the signal was finished. British warships sent to the spot rescued 898 survivors, but 9 officers and 374 men were missing, though some of them may have reached France in ships' boats.

German comment on the incident was typical. First they said that the British must have sunk the ship. Then, when they realized that, before it was known what the ship was, they had already claimed her destruction as "a particularly fine success," they said that she deserved to be sunk for having sailed without waiting for a safe-conduct. A number of those who were saved changed their minds and elected after all to join the Free French and continue to fight against Germany.

At Alexandria, where the relations between Admiral Godfroy and Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham were particularly close and cordial, a different arrangement was adopted. Admiral Godfroy, recognizing that in the presence of overwhelming British force he had no option but to comply with British demands rather than obey the orders of Vichy, agreed to demilitarize his ships and send all his men back to France, except those required as ship-keepers. Breech-blocks of guns, all ammunition, and nearly all oil fuel was therefore landed from the one battleship, several cruisers, destroyers, and smaller warships which

composed the French contingent of the Mediterranean Fleet, and the crews returned to French territory.

That provided for all the French ships which were so situated that they were in direct British control ; but there were others at French North African ports. Some cruisers were believed to be at Bizerta, while at Mers-el-Kebir, the naval anchorage of Oran in French Morocco, were the two fast battleships *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg*, the old battleships *Bretagne* and *Provence*, three cruisers, and a number of torpedo craft and submarines. It was obviously urgent to take steps to keep this force out of German hands.

A strong fleet under Vice-Admiral Sir James Somerville, with his flag in the battle-cruiser *Hood*, was therefore sent to Oran on July 3rd. It was preceded by a letter to Admiral Gensoul, who commanded the French squadron, to the effect that, as it was essential for the British Navy to provide against the possibility of his ships becoming available to Germany, he was invited to sail with them forthwith to a British port. Once there, he was invited to continue his former collaboration with the British Navy in the war against Germany ; but if he did not feel that he could do that, then he was invited to man his ships with reduced crews only, who would be repatriated to France forthwith, while the ships themselves would be restored to France at the end of the war. If he felt it incumbent on him to ensure that his ships could not be used against Germany, then he was requested instead to sail them with reduced crews to the French West Indies, either to be demilitarized there or to be entrusted to the custody of the United States until the end of the war. If he should refuse all these alternatives, then he was required to sink his ships within six hours, failing which Admiral Somerville regretted to have to inform him that the British squadron had orders to use such force as might be necessary to ensure that the French ships should in no circumstances become available to our enemies.

The world—outside the Axis—acknowledged these terms to be fair, honourable, and fully justified ; yet Admiral Gensoul apparently held himself bound in loyalty to his new conquerors rather than his old allies, for he returned no answer or acknowledgment to Admiral Somerville. The latter waited for some time after the six hours specified in his letter, and then, as it was reported to him that the French ships were raising steam, was compelled to act. The British squadron opened fire on the French ships, continued firing for ten minutes, and the Fleet Air Arm then attacked with bombs. The *Bretagne* was blown up, the *Dunkerque*,

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the *Provence*, and the destroyer *Mogador* damaged so that they had to be beached to prevent them sinking, but the *Strasbourg* and five destroyers succeeded in putting to sea, and, despite a torpedo attack by the Fleet Air Arm which claimed one hit on the battleship, escaped to Toulon. Three days later, in order to make quite certain that the *Dunkerque* should not also return to France, six more bombs were dropped on her, after she had been abandoned by her crew.

Two days later still, similar terms were offered to the captain of the *Richelieu* at Dakar, but they too were ignored and it was necessary to put her also out of action. This was effected with a minimum of danger to her company by dropping depth-charges on the bottom of the shallow harbour under her stern so as to disable her rudder and screws beyond local repair. This was done from a ship's motor-boat under the command of Lieutenant-Commander R. R. Bristowe, which entered the harbour by crossing the boom defence unobserved after dark and withdrew later the same way. After her attack, the *Richelieu* was hit by five torpedoes dropped by the Fleet Air Arm ; she listed over and settled down on the harbour bottom, out of action without the loss of a life, as far as is known.

These incidents very naturally aroused intense resentment in France, but that did not excuse the official issue of an untrue version of the British terms which omitted all mention of the first three alternatives and stated only that the French admiral was required to sink his ships within six hours. A garbled version of what was happening seems to have reached Hitler too ; before Admiral Somerville's six hours had elapsed he telegraphed his gracious permission to Admiral Gensoul to scuttle his ships—not realizing, it is to be supposed, that it is only Germans and Italians who regard such an action as glorious. In retaliation for the action at Oran and Dakar, French air forces from Morocco made bomb attacks on Gibraltar on July 5th, 6th, and 7th. On July 12th the British Government informed the Vichy Government that no further action would be taken against French ships provided they remained where they were and did not attempt to return to France.

## THE FREE FRENCH OVERSEAS

These were unfortunately not the only occasions on which the British and French Navies, so lately allied, were brought into collision. Various parts of the French Empire joined the Free French movement under General de Gaulle, and in September, it appears, the General was given to understand that it only needed his presence at Dakar for French

West Africa to do the same. He therefore planned to go there, but wind of his plans must have reached Vichy—probably through Dakar, where there were undoubtedly sympathisers with both French parties—for on September 11th three cruisers, the *Georges Leygues*, *Gloire*, and *Montcalm*, and three destroyers, *Le Malin*, *Le Fantasque*, and *L'Audacieux*, left Toulon and passed the Straits of Gibraltar. For this breach of the armistice conditions they must have had German permission, but as they were not going to a port under German control, there was no attempt by the British Navy to interfere with them, although de Gaulle's expedition was already on passage. The six ships went to Dakar, but later put to sea again, steaming south ; as it was then thought that they were heading for French possessions farther south which had already joined the Free French, British warships then intercepted them and induced them to return to Dakar.

On September 23rd the Free French sloops *Savorgnan de Brazza*, *Commandant Duboc*, and *Commandant Dom* arrived off Dakar and sent a boat in towards the harbour under the Tricolor and a white flag carrying three unarmed officers, one of them the grandson of Marshal Foch, as *parlementaires*. They were fired on by the harbour defences and two of them wounded. The firing was then extended to the French sloops, and later, in spite of warnings that it would be returned, to the British men-of-war who had been escorting the expedition to protect it on passage. Even after fire had been opened, the British admiral did not return it until after a second warning, but when he did there were hits and casualties on both sides. The British admiral also warned Dakar that if any French submarines left harbour they would be engaged, but that warning was also disregarded and three submarines attacked the British squadron. Two of them were sunk, though the entire crew of one of them, the *Persée*, were rescued and later landed in French territory. General de Gaulle, not wishing to fight his own countrymen, abandoned the attempt to land and withdrew his troops. The action between British and French seems to have continued into another day, but it was then discontinued and the British force also withdrew ; Vichy reported that the battleships *Barham* and *Resolution* had been damaged by the fire of the harbour defences and that the cruiser *Kent* had been torpedoed.

Neither the statement issued by the Ministry of Information on September 25th nor the Prime Minister's statement later in Parliament—which did not seem altogether to agree—gave a very full or satisfactory

## NAVAL OPERATIONS

account of the whole very unfortunate episode. American newspapers described it as "a major blunder." The only result of the whole affair was to strengthen the anti-British sentiment originally aroused at Oran.

## THE AMERICAN DEAL

A very welcome reinforcement to the British anti-submarine forces, which had been severely depleted by the losses and damage which resulted from the prolonged coastal operations of April, May, and June, was provided by the completion, announced on September 3rd, of the Anglo-American deal whereby the United States acquired leases of sites for naval and air bases in a number of British possessions in the Western Atlantic, while the British Navy acquired fifty "over-age" U.S. destroyers of the 1,200-ton flush-deck type dating from the last war or just after it. The American bases were to be located in Newfoundland, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Antigua, St. Lucia, Trinidad, and British Guiana.

The acquisition of these sites was heartily welcomed in the United States, not only because they would greatly assist naval and air operations in the Western Atlantic, but also because an American foothold in the West Indies would, it was thought, be an insurance against the possibility of their transfer to Germany in the event—which in America, surprisingly, seems to have been regarded as a possibility—of a British defeat by her. In the West Indies and other islands there was some apprehension lest any change of sovereignty should be contemplated; but the British Government was careful to allay that.

## GERMAN WAR ON SHIPPING

The value of the Norwegian coast to Germany was demonstrated as evidence accumulated that one or more raiders had succeeded in gaining the open ocean unobserved. In May a minefield had been discovered off Cape Agulhas, the southernmost point of Africa, but fortunately no ship was lost in it and the mines were cleared before any damage was done. On June 19th the liner *Niagara* was sunk by striking a mine just outside Auckland, New Zealand—clear evidence that the raider, probably a disguised merchant ship, had reached the Antipodes. On July 10th, however, another one made her appearance, when the s.s. *King John* was sunk in the Atlantic in the latitude of the West Indies, and the s.s. *Davision* three days later in the same neighbourhood; some of their

crews reached the West Indies a few days later in their boats. Their assailant was said to be named *Narvik*, 8,000-9,000 tons, armed with four 6-inch guns.

On July 29th, H.M.S. *Alcantara*, armed merchant cruiser, engaged a disguised raider, which may have been the *Narvik*, near the island of Trinidad, 600 miles off the Brazilian coast. Hits were made by both ships, but the *Alcantara*'s speed was eventually reduced, and the enemy was able to escape. This raider or another also captured the British s.s. *Haxby* about this time and the Norwegian *Tropic Sea*. The crew of the *Haxby*, which was sunk, were put on board the Norwegian, which was sent off with a prize crew for a French port. She was intercepted, however, early in September off Cape Finisterre by H.M.S. *Truant*, submarine, and was promptly scuttled by the prize crew, who had explosive charges all ready placed for that operation; the *Haxby*'s crew were rescued.

On August 20th, the s.s. *Turakina* reported that she was being shelled in the Tasman Sea, between Australia and New Zealand, probably by the raider which was known to have been in those seas; while on August 29th a New York radio station reported picking up a message from the s.s. *British Commander*, a tanker, that she was being shelled 300 miles south of Madagascar. The latter may have been the *Alcantara*'s opponent, though it seems on the whole more likely that she was another ship. On October 30th an official German announcement mentioned a "warship operating overseas" which had sunk 45,000 tons of shipping. On November 7th and 8th respectively British and American ships struck mines in the Bass Strait, between Australia and Tasmania, which were, of course, found to be German when the field was cleared. On November 24th the s.s. *Port Hobart* reported that she was being shelled 500 miles north-eastward of the Windward Islands. On November 22nd the s.s. *Port Brisbane* was sunk by a raider in the Indian Ocean, described by survivors, when they were landed in Australia five days later, as being very similar to the *Narvik*.

A different sort of raider also made its appearance about this time, when the long nights facilitated the exit even of ships incapable of disguise. On November 5th a homeward-bound convoy of 37 ships, escorted at the moment by the armed merchant-cruiser H.M.S. *Jervis Bay*, Captain Fogarty Fegen, was attacked in mid-Atlantic about 1,000 miles east of Newfoundland. At 5 p.m. on a fine evening with a smooth sea, light breeze from the south-east, and good visibility, the German

## NAVAL OPERATIONS

battleship *Admiral Scheer*—sister-ship of the *Admiral Graf Spee*—came into sight ten miles to the northward, on the port beam, and at once opened fire with a salvo which fell in the middle of the convoy.

The Commodore of the convoy, Rear-Admiral H. B. Maltby, in the s.s. *Cornish City*, turned the convoy away to starboard, and then ordered them to drop smoke-floats and scatter; at the same time the *Jervis Bay* steamed out to engage the raider and cover, as far as lay in her power, the escape of the convoy. She was, of course, completely out-matched, and indeed it seems doubtful if she ever got within effective range of the enemy; but she held the enemy's fire for a full hour before she was disabled by fire and shell damage, and by that time it was so dark that the raider could sink no more than four ships of the convoy. The *Jervis Bay* sank two hours later. Captain Fegen was killed and only 65 of her company survived; but they had done their duty, and by their sacrifice had saved nine-tenths of those under their charge. A posthumous V.C. was awarded to Captain Fegen in token of the nation's pride in the spirit of the Navy so well demonstrated by him and his men, and its gratitude for what they had accomplished.

These depredations were, of course, only a part of Germany's war on shipping which was greatly intensified in the period under review—helped, as has been already noted, by a depletion of the British anti-submarine forces just at the time that the calls on them were intensified by the defection of an ally and the addition of a new enemy possessing over 100 submarines. As it turned out and is described later, the new enemy contributed but little to the depredations; but none the less it was necessary to divert torpedo craft to deal with Italian submarines, thus leaving so many fewer to deal with the U-boats in home waters and the Atlantic.

The U-boat campaign—which in this war has been assisted and reinforced by the use of aircraft against shipping—is the precise counterpart at sea of the bombing campaign against cities on land, a campaign of sheer destruction, directed for preference against non-combatants. For centuries the influence of the advance of civilization on war has been in the direction of transforming it from an occasion for rapine and pillage into a struggle for control, and of sparing civilians, more and more, from the impact of its brutalities. It has been reserved for Germany to reintroduce the savagery of the Dark Ages, thinking to cow the world by striking for preference at those who cannot strike back.

To this object they have brought, in the persons of some of their

U-boat commanders at least, great determination and great skill. Rudely surprised at the beginning of the war by British proficiency in anti-submarine methods, they found means, by the development of new tactical methods and of co-operation between U-boat and aircraft, to exploit the British shortage of anti-U-boat escort craft. The result was that the curve of British losses of shipping rose sharply in the period under review to a peak in the three months August, September, and October. This began to give serious concern in this country. In November, however, the peak was past.

One development was that both U-boats and aircraft began to work farther out in the Atlantic than before, greatly helped by the possession of ports and air bases in France and by the employment of the large long-distance bombers which had been originally designed as trans-Atlantic mail aircraft. On June 11th, for instance, the Greek ship *Hymettos* was sunk by a U-boat off the coast of Portugal; on July 1st the British s.s. *Zarian* was torpedoed 300 miles west of Ireland; on July 15th, the Panamanian s.s. *Frossoula* was sunk without warning by bombs from a German aircraft 250 miles north-west of Cape Finisterre.

Then again, when control of the opposite coast of the narrow seas passed into German hands, motor torpedo boats—now called “E-boats” for short—were brought into action against merchant shipping. An East Coast convoy was attacked by them—unsuccessfully—on June 10th and there were frequent similar attacks thereafter. Mines, of course, laid both by submarines in waters they could reach and by aircraft in harbours and the approaches to them, were used without intermission and took a certain toll of shipping, despite the great augmentation of the mine-sweeping forces and their devoted service. In July, air attacks by dive-bombers on convoys in the Channel began, to be intensified through that month and August; but the losses of *Stukas* mounted so rapidly and steadily that this method was gradually discontinued. On July 25th a convoy of 21 small coasters was attacked by successive waves of about 30 enemy aircraft, which were counter-attacked in their turn by shore-based fighters. The enemy lost 28 aircraft for certain on that day, but they achieved some success against the convoy. Five small ships were sunk and five more were damaged: average size some 1,000 tons. Later nine E-boats attempted to attack the same convoy, but retired precipitately under smoke screens when attacked by the *Boreas* and another destroyer. Later, the provision of balloon barrages for these convoys proved a very effective deterrent to the *Stukas*.

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Another method adopted by the enemy was that of long-range guns mounted on the French shore of the Dover Straits. The preparation of these was observed, and British similar guns were mounted and manned by the Royal Marines in the Dover area, ready to reply to the German. One or two practice shots seem to have been fired from Boulogne on August 13th, which fell on shore in East Kent, and on August 22nd fire was opened on a convoy passing through the Straits, the first salvo falling in the middle of the convoy. The escort at once laid a smoke-screen for its protection; the R.A.F. drove off the German spotting aeroplanes; the Marines opened fire on the German gun positions and the convoy passed on unharmed. Thereafter gun duels across the Straits were frequent.

September was marked by a particularly characteristic action on the part of the Germans—the attacks on ships carrying children to North America. The Dutch s.s. *Volendam* with 320 of them on board was torpedoed soon after sailing, but fortunately only one life was lost and all the children were saved. But on September 17th the *City of Benares* was torpedoed at night in bad weather 600 miles from land, and 248 lives were lost, including 79 out of the 98 children on board.

The attack which chiefly helped to make October the peak month of shipping losses was one by U-boats in company on a convoy during the night of October 19th–20th. There were certainly two U-boats, commanded, according to the German announcement, by Captain Prien and Lieutenant Endrass, who reported sinking 17 ships of a total tonnage of 110,000. That figure was an exaggeration, but the losses for that week proved, when they were issued shortly afterwards by the Admiralty, to be the highest of the war. But after that success, there was a lull, though on October 26th aircraft bombed the large C.P.R. liner *Empress of Britain* and set her on fire. The fire got out of hand and the ship had to be abandoned, and though attempts were made to tow her in, she was torpedoed on the way by a U-boat commanded by Lieutenant Jaenisch. That officer was shortly afterwards landed in England as a prisoner of war.

That the German command was becoming disturbed in the summer by the number of airmen lost in their air attacks on ports and convoys was demonstrated by two typically German attempts to exploit British observance of the international conventions which Germany herself had flagrantly flouted. Towards the end of July a number of seaplanes marked with the Red Cross were observed flying near the English coasts

and one of them, when brought in and examined, was found to have been in use for military communications, though the German intention was, no doubt, to represent them as employed solely on the humane task of rescuing pilots shot down into the sea. The German Government was at once informed that they would not be permitted to frequent the zone of operations, and since this warning was disregarded, two of them which on July 29th approached the coast in company with strong fighter patrols were shot down into the sea. That project being frustrated, a month later the Germans tried another, informing the Swiss Government that they intended to employ 64 motor-boats, marked with the Red Cross, round the coasts of Britain to rescue airmen from the sea. This proposal, coming from the power which had consistently violated the Red Cross, fired upon and bombed clearly marked hospital ships, and made a point of attacking British rescue boats even when engaged on picking up Germans, was sheer impudence. Germany was informed that no such proceeding would be permitted, and nothing more was heard of the project.

#### GERMAN SEA COMMUNICATIONS ATTACKED

The mere physical possession of the Low Countries and the French Channel coast could be of little advantage to the enemy in his further campaign against this country—except for air purposes—unless he could make use of the ports. That entailed moving shipping along the coast to them from German waters, which thus became open to attack by us, and of course an adequate supply of fuel in those ports could only be brought by sea, thus providing us with other targets. Both the Navy and the R.A.F. took full advantage of these opportunities.

On July 9th aircraft of the Coastal Command reported having sunk a mine-sweeper and a supply ship; on July 21st and 27th more supply ships. On July 24th torpedo-bombers of the Fleet Air Arm sank the German escort sloop *Königen Luise* off the German coast. On September 11th a German convoy going from Calais to Boulogne under cover of an attack on Dover by dive-bombers and shore guns was attacked by both the Fleet Air Arm and the Coastal Command, who also attacked similar convoys the next day off Dunkirk, Cap Gris Nez, and Havre, using machine-guns on the escorting E-boats and sinking several ships. Similar attacks were frequent throughout October, while air attacks on the concentrations of barges in what came to be known as the "invasion ports" were constant from July onwards.

Convoys were attacked off one part of the coast or another on October 3rd, 23rd, November 2nd, 19th, and 27th, a number of ships being sunk by bombs or torpedoes. On October 9th a naval force bombarded Cherbourg dockyard and harbour installations with highly successful results, and a week later the same thing was done at Dunkirk. Simultaneously with the first bombardment, the Fleet Air Arm and Coastal Command attacked Brest from the air and made hits on the German destroyers there ; at the same time as the second, a whole German convoy, of three ships with two escort vessels, was destroyed in a locality not disclosed. On November 2nd the *Taku* sank a tanker going towards a French port ; on November 4th the *Sturgeon* sank two more supply ships close to the enemy coast ; on November 27th, 28th, and 29th the Coastal Command made successful torpedo attacks on tankers and other supply ships off the Frisian Islands.

There were also some clashes between ships. On August 13th a British motor torpedo boat attacked an E-boat just before dawn, but the result was not known ; the next morning the destroyers *Malcolm* and *Verity* engaged six armed trawlers and three E-boats, sinking one of each and sustaining no damage or casualties themselves. On October 18th four German destroyers made a sortie from Brest. They were seen from the air in the morning, but owing to poor visibility they were not engaged until the afternoon, when they were engaged by a British cruiser at long range. They retired on Brest at high speed, and though air attacks were made on both sides, the result to them was not known. There was no damage to British ships, and some of them sank one enemy armed trawler out of three found close to the French coast ; the others took refuge under a shore battery. On November 29th a small force of British destroyers made contact in the mouth of the Channel before dawn with three or four German destroyers, which immediately scattered and made for Brest. They were seen to be hit, but they got away, while the *Javelin*, on board which was the British senior officer, Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten, was hit by a torpedo and had to be towed in. She was attacked three times on the way by enemy bombers, but all three were shot down by British fighters.

#### THE WAR AGAINST ITALY

On June 5th the Italian Government declared a danger zone of 12 miles from all Italian coasts and ordered all Italian merchant ships outside Italian waters to take refuge in neutral ports. On June 10th

Mussolini in one of his most blatant speeches from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia declared that Italy was at war with France and England. The Italian flag forthwith disappeared from the seas, and in four days Italy lost shipping to a total of 210,855 tons, about 80,000 tons of which was captured by us. Much of the rest was scuttled by the ships' crews, copying that habit from their German masters.

The war in the Mediterranean opened with air attacks on both sides ; no attempt to enumerate or describe them will be made here, except to remark that Malta had 50 before the end of June, though with curiously little result after the first few days. On the night of June 10th, however, the Libyan port of Tobruk was bombarded from the sea by British heavy ships—not named, though later information points to the monitor *Terror* having been at least one of the ships employed ; the old cruiser *San Giorgio*, stationed there as guardship, was set on fire and beached, thereafter to be converted into a fort for defence of the harbour.

On June 12th the British cruiser *Calypso* was torpedoed and sunk by an Italian submarine—Mussolini's most vaunted arm. That feat was no doubt hailed by him as an earnest of what the great fleet of Italian submarines would accomplish, but if so, he was to be severely disappointed, for it was their high-water mark. On June 14th damaged Italian submarines took refuge in Ceuta and Algeciras ; on June 16th a British announcement of the destruction of four Italian submarines in the six days that the war had so far been going on was issued. On June 22nd the *Galileo Galilei* surrendered to the British armed trawler *Moonstone* and was towed a prize into Aden ; on June 30th the total destroyed was announced at 13, to be increased to 14 on July 1st when a flying-boat of the R.A.F., which already had one to its credit, destroyed yet another from which three officers and a petty officer were rescued. The rate of destruction slackened off after that, principally, it would seem, because the submarines found it healthier to avoid localities where British men-of-war were to be met ; for certainly they achieved nothing against the British Fleet, except in July to put a torpedo into the destroyer *Escort*, which sank later. They did, however, manage to sink an Iranian steamer in the Eastern Mediterranean, two Spanish ships in the west, and later on some stray ships in the Atlantic, but that was the extent of the influence they were able to exert on the war. At the beginning of October an unofficial estimate from Algiers put the total then at 22 destroyed. On November 2nd the loss of

was admitted, on November 3rd a damaged one took refuge in Tangier, followed the next day by another.

On June 28th the first encounter between surface ships occurred. Three Italian destroyers were located by British aircraft in the eastern Mediterranean, and when engaged by a British flotilla, one of them, the *Espero*, was sunk, but the others escaped. Forty-four survivors were picked up.

The next encounter was on July 9th, and it took place as one incident in a series of operations between July 7th and 12th, of which the principal object was the passage to Egypt of a convoy from home with reinforcements for General Wavell's Army of the Nile. The convoy was escorted from Gibraltar by Admiral Sir James Somerville's force, and was transferred somewhere near Sicily to Sir Andrew Cunningham's fleet coming from Egypt. The western squadron was attacked heavily and repeatedly by Italian aircraft, but was not hit and had no casualties ; it encountered no ships. The Mediterranean Fleet was also bombed as soon as it came within bomber range of Italy, and on July 8th the *Gloucester*, cruiser, was hit on the bridge and her captain was killed ; but she was not disabled and did not fall out. On July 9th the fleet made contact with an Italian force consisting of the battleships *Cavour* and *Giulio Cesare*, a large number of cruisers, several of them 8-inch-gun ships, and about 25 destroyers. The Italians at once retired at a high speed which was greater than the British could achieve, and only a few salvos were exchanged at long range ; one hit was made on one of the Italian battleships, killing 29 and wounding 69 of her company. A smoke-screen was immediately laid by the Italian destroyers, and though Admiral Cunningham pursued until within sight of Sicily, he could not renew the action. The Fleet Air Arm made torpedo attacks and reported a hit on a cruiser, and the next day a destroyer and a depot-ship sunk in a harbour north of Port Augusta. The British fleet was repeatedly bombed but no hit was made, except that on the *Gloucester*, and 20 Italian bombers were shot down.

On July 19th H.M.A.S. *Sydney* with four destroyers encountered the two cruisers *Bartolomeo Colleoni* and *Giovanni delle Bande Nere* in the Kithera Channel north-west of Crete. Either of the Italians was, on paper, a match for the *Sydney*, which nevertheless immediately attacked. The *Colleoni* was hit in the engine-room and her engines disabled, to be sunk shortly afterwards by a torpedo from one of the British destroyers, while the *Sydney* shifted her fire to the *Bande Nere*. She too was hit,

but her speed enabled her to get away. Five hundred and forty-five survivors were picked up from the *Colleoni*, including her captain, who died of his wounds. There were no British casualties at all, either in the ship action or in the bomb attacks made on the British ships during their return to Alexandria.

In August the British submarines *Oswald*, *Odin*, and *Orpheus* were lost. An Italian report stated that 52 of the *Oswald's* complement of 55 had been saved when she was rammed by the destroyer *Vivaldi*. Against that may be set the success of a British air attack made with torpedoes on a destroyer, a depot-ship, and two submarines in the harbour of Bomba on August 20th, when all four were sunk. Three nights later H.M.S. *Ladybird* steamed right into the harbour of Bardia in the dark, almost alongside the pier, and bombarded guns, barracks, etc., at point-blank range before withdrawing unrecognized and unharmed.

On August 15th an Italian submarine torpedoed the Greek cruiser *Helle* in circumstances of peculiar and brutal treachery, when she was lying off the island of Tinos taking part in the Festival of the Assumption. Greek destroyers sent to investigate were bombed on their way by Italian aircraft. Greece mobilized on August 25th.

Another British convoy was taken through at the beginning of September. Aircraft of Admiral Somerville's Fleet Air Arm shot down a number of Italian scouting aircraft and also bombed two aerodromes in Sardinia. In the Eastern Basin, Admiral Cunningham's air scouts reported an Italian fleet at sea 150 miles away from him on September 1st, but they retired back to Taranto at speed before he could engage. He was attacked by dive-bombers in the Sicilian Channel the next day, but no ship was hit; five attackers were shot down and four more chased nearly to Sicily. The next day aerodromes in the Dodecanese were bombed and bombarded, two E-boats out of five that emerged from the harbour of Pegadia in Scarpanto, three of which attacked, being sunk by British destroyers.

Throughout the campaign, British submarines continually harried Italian sea communications with Tripoli and other Libyan ports, which were always on the move when Admiral Cunningham's fleet was safely 800 miles away in Alexandria. From September 13th, when the Italian Army started its advance into Egypt as far as Sidi Barrani, ships were active in bombarding Italian positions from the sea, easily reached because the only road runs along the coast.

From September 29th to October 2nd the Mediterranean Fleet again

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swept the Eastern Basin, landing certain military reinforcements at Malta in the course of their cruise. Again a strong enemy force was located at sea by air scouts, but returned hastily to harbour before it could be engaged ; again the British fleet was unharmed by the frequent bomb attacks. On October 12th the *Ajax* met and engaged three small destroyers of the *Airone* class at 2.30 a.m. in the Sicilian Channel, sinking two of them. She then encountered an enemy heavy cruiser and four large destroyers and again attacked, disabling one destroyer as the others made off. The *Artigliere* was found in tow of another destroyer at daylight, and was sunk by the *York*, which had then come to the support of the *Ajax*, while the *Ajax* unsuccessfully chased the destroyer that had been towing. The next day the *Liverpool* was hit by a torpedo dropped by an Italian aircraft, but reached harbour safely. On October 21st a British convoy in the southern Red Sea was attacked by a number of Italian torpedo craft, one of which, the *Francesco Nullo*, was damaged by the fire of the convoy escort. She was engaged the next morning by the *Kimberley*, which drove her ashore and finally finished her off with a torpedo. The rest of the Italian flotilla had returned at high speed to Massowa, where they gave out that they had sunk a whole British convoy ; actually the convoy was undamaged.

On October 29th Italy declared war on Greece, whose harbours were thereby placed at our disposal, greatly to Admiral Cunningham's advantage. On October 30th two Italian officers made a daring attack on the harbour of Gibraltar with some sort of special torpedo craft such as was used in the last war more than once. It was unsuccessful, one exploding harmlessly outside the harbour and the other running ashore on Spanish territory at La Linea.

November was the great month in our Italian campaign. On November 11th—Armistice Day—cruisers and destroyers of the Mediterranean Fleet swept the southern Adriatic and found a convoy of four ships between Valona and Brindisi, escorted by two destroyers. The two destroyers at once escaped under a smoke-screen, one of them damaged ; of the convoy, one ship was sunk, two set on fire, and only one escaped. That same night, aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm made their famous attack on the Italian Fleet in Taranto Harbour, bombers going over first and dropping flares, by the light of which the torpedo aircraft made their attack. The result was ascertained beyond doubt by photographs taken the next day and three days later. The *Littorio* was beached with her forecastle under water ; one of the Cavour class was on the bottom with

only her fore part out of water, to be abandoned two days later ; another of the Cavours was also damaged and beached ; two cruisers in the inner harbour were listing and leaking oil fuel ; and two auxiliaries were lying with their sterns under water. A few days later all the Italian ships which could steam had left the port for, presumably, safer anchorages. Two of the attacking aircraft did not return, but the Italians announced that they had shot down six and taken the crews prisoner.

While this was happening, the *Ark Royal's* aircraft were attacking Cagliari in Sardinia.

On November 27th, Sir James Somerville was able to repeat Sir Andrew Cunningham's exploit of July. His squadron consisted of the battle-cruiser *Renown*, his flagship, one battleship, the aircraft-carrier *Ark Royal*, some cruisers and destroyers. At 10 a.m. his air scouts reported the *Vittorio Veneto*, the *Giulio Cesare*, a large number of cruisers and destroyers, 70 miles away in the direction of Sardinia. He at once gave chase, and at 12.20 was able to open fire at extreme range ; but the enemy retired at full speed towards the fortified ports of Sardinia, and he was unable to keep up with them. Even when the *Renown* had left her slower consort far behind and was unsupported, the Italian fleet continued its retirement, and the Fleet Air Arm this time were unable to delay them. One Italian destroyer, the *Lancieri*, was damaged and had to be towed in ; one cruiser was seen to have been damaged by gun-fire. On the British side the *Berwick* was hit and had a few casualties. Again there was no damage from the inevitable air attacks that followed as long as the British squadron was within air range of Italian territory, and it had been conclusively and convincingly demonstrated with whom the control of the Mediterranean lay. Sir James Somerville's squadron had a rousing reception when it arrived back at Gibraltar.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FALL OF FRANCE

BY JULES MENKEN

#### I. INTRODUCTION

To those who may be able later to view the war as a whole, the period from the beginning of June to the end of November, 1940, can scarcely appear in perspective as other than critical. The downfall of France, the extension of the conflict to the Mediterranean basin, the early defeat and withdrawals of Britain in Africa, the threatened break-up of the French Colonial Empire and the fierce (though largely concealed) struggle for its control, the first stages of the ill-starred attack which Mussolini launched against Greece, the slow but steady and sure spread of concern and partisanship to the principal countries previously neutral—all these tremendous events piled themselves on one another like the foothills and mountains and peaks of some large watershed of history. The great divide, which seemed at the time to determine down which slope the affairs of mankind were to flow for generations, was the first Battle of Britain. On one side of the watershed lay abominations of brutality, oppression, and tyranny, as well as a creed which deliberately exalted ignorance and evil, such as Western Civilization had not known for fifteen hundred years, and such as never in human annals had been backed by instruments of force so destructive and so massively marshalled. On the other side were freedom and a social order which at least sought after justice, decency, and kindness. The divide was the will and ability of Britain to withstand alone the full fury of German attack ; and upon the power of Britain to continue the war all else at this stage depended.

The results of the first Battle of Britain are known. In the main, it was a visible, glorious, and successful battle in the air, and a battle by sea no less glorious and successful because largely invisible. On land, however, there were only preparations, but no fighting. The actual operations which the first Battle of Britain entailed are therefore dealt with elsewhere in this volume.

The strategic results of this fateful contest were naturally of the first magnitude. In Mr. Churchill's famous words, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." These results are closely linked with the larger strategy of the expanding war. They ought therefore to be treated in this chapter along with the other great operations in distant theatres of struggle where fighting and strategic significance alike achieved levels rarely overtapped in the long annals of warfare.

To do this was our original plan. But it was necessary first to deal with the Battle of France and with the tragic and wholly unexpected results to which that terrible conflict led. It was necessary, moreover, not merely to recount the external happenings of the Battle of France, but also—so far as knowledge available at the time permitted—to analyse their underlying causes and significance. For the collapse of France is more than one of the great tragedies of history. It is an event fraught with instruction for all those to whom the life of nations appears, not as the inescapable outcome of vast, blind, and impersonal forces, but as the all-too-human result of the traditions, characters, conduct, and wills of living men and women.

There was another reason for dealing at length with the collapse of France. The fate of the Third French Republic and of the Governments that may succeed it possesses high practical importance. Britain must always remain France's neighbour. The far-flung areas over which the peoples of the English-speaking world have rule shoulder and elbow the territories of the French Empire at every turn. Sooner or later great decisions of far-reaching import must be taken with regard to France—and with France. These decisions may be affairs of Governments in the first instance ; but they can be soundly based only if they are widely and truly understood.

For these reasons it seemed desirable to give the collapse of France a fuller treatment and a closer analysis than was originally intended. Space and time then intervened to preclude the discussion in this volume of the developing strategy of the war and the other fighting on land during the six months under review. It is hoped, however, to deal suitably with these subjects in the next volume.

## 2. THE BATTLE OF FRANCE

Barely had the smoke cleared from the stricken dunes before the Germans launched their next great stroke

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attack to the south. The Dunkirk evacuation ended officially on the morning of Tuesday, June 4th. Early next day the Battle of France began. It was heralded by Hitler in an Order of the Day issued to the German Army, in which he not only proclaimed the beginning of the new battle and threatened his opponents with war until they were annihilated,<sup>1</sup> but also announced that "countless new German divisions" would join the forces of the Third Reich already on the Western Front.

The French position was difficult but not patently hopeless. In the east the situation was the legacy of the misconceptions, disorganization, and mistakes which facilitated the German break-through at Sedan. M. Reynaud analysed their nature and cause before the French Senate on May 21st in a speech remarkable for its frankness. The Meuse (said the French Premier) was mistakenly considered a serious obstacle to the enemy. Hence the French divisions charged with its defence were few and thinly spread out; they comprised troops "less solidly officered and less well trained" than other divisions; and when the Germans attacked, half of the French infantry concerned had not yet reached the river, despite the shortness of the movements they were called upon to make. Moreover, "through unbelievable faults"—which M. Reynaud undertook to punish—the Meuse bridges were not destroyed. Across them poured the attacking German armoured columns, to encounter nothing but "scattered, badly organized, badly trained" French divisions in an army characterized by "total disorganization." M. Reynaud stated that in this area a certain General Corap was in command; and it was well that this officer had enjoyed few other opportunities to become publicly known. But despite the original weaknesses, inefficiency, and blunders which led to such sorry results in this sector, the vital hinge at the western end of the true Maginot Line nevertheless remained unbroken; and from Longuyon (some ten miles south-east of the Line's termination at Montmédy) westward to the sea stretched the new defences in depth which General Weygand, using the time so dearly bought during the fierce fighting in Flanders and Northern France, had prepared and organized.

When the Battle of France began, the left (or western) flank of the Allied Armies rested on the Channel Coast near the estuary of the Somme,

<sup>1</sup> The language and psychology of this threat are so curious that they deserve to be remembered. "As our enemies still reject peace," Hitler wrote, "they shall face war until they have been annihilated" ("Da die Gegner den Frieden immer noch verneinen, wird sie der Kampf bis zur vollen Vernichtung treffen") This from the man whose invading armies, after violating eight other countries, stood deep inside the frontiers of France!

while their right (or eastern) flank was buttressed on the Maginot Line at Longuyon. From St. Valéry-sur-Somme to Longuyon was about 180 miles as the crow flies. Along the course followed by the new Weygand Line the distance was about 210 miles. Except for two important gaps, each some thirty miles long, the course of the Somme and the Aisne covered the Line throughout. On the west the valley of the Somme provided throughout much of its length a strong natural barrier to tank operations. The river-bed was wide and marshy, with frequent deep cuttings in the chalky soil where tributaries flowed through neighbouring plateaux. Both the river itself, and also the canal which followed a straighter channel in the valley of the meandering middle Somme, were still full of water. From St. Valéry at the mouth of the estuary for thirty-five miles to Amiens, and from Amiens another forty-five miles along the river to Ham, the Weygand Line followed the course of the Somme, except at Abbeville, Amiens, Péronne, and Ham, where German bridge-heads spanned the river and provided footholds from which the Germans could try to fan out to the south.

Between the Somme at Ham and the Aisne roughly at Vailly (some ten miles east of Soissons) was one of the two gaps not covered by the two rivers. In this relatively weak sector, the front, after leaving the Somme at Ham, followed the Crozat Canal eastwards to the Oise near La Fère (where the Germans had seized important railway workshops in May), turned south for a little distance along the Oise, and then swung east again along the line of the Oise-Aisne (or Ailette) Canal to Vailly. In this rich and fertile country, the French armies were covering the important road and railway junction of Soissons on the left bank of the Aisne; but before them the Germans at Laon farther north were within striking distance of the mighty ridge and road, known as the Chemin des Dames, which dominated the Aisne valley. Beyond the famous Ladies' Road, the front entered the spacious plains of Champagne, ultimately leaving the Aisne to cut across the broken, hilly, wooded country of the French Ardennes—the second gap not covered by the two rivers—until at last it reached the Maginot Line proper at Longuyon. Between Longuyon and the Meuse, some miles to the west, well-prepared field defences covered the sector as far as Montmédy, where the Maginot Line ended.

In organizing his defences General Weygand suffered from many and grave disadvantages; though in a few respects the gain from the lessons of bitter recent experience was not unimportant. The German breakthrough at Sedan and the campaign in the Low Countries and Northern

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France had brought the enemy behind the French northern defences, and destroyed at least fifteen French and half-a-dozen British divisions. The Allied forces lost comprised, moreover, some of the best troops, much of the best equipment, and a large proportion of the tanks and armoured units in the Allied armies. But if French losses were serious, and if the size, power, and higher direction of the modern German Army were formidable, the French had at least overcome the shock of surprise and the perils of false military doctrine. French troops had encountered and survived the terrifying appearance of tanks in masses, and the morally shattering effects of dive-bombing. The French Staff had learned that a line is useless through which, when broken, armoured forces can pour like water through holes in an iron plate, and that proper defence against tank and motorized attack must be elastic and in depth. Even at the outset, the number of French tanks and anti-tank guns was far too small ; and the heavy loss of *materiel* captured with the northern armies reduced the available remainder dangerously. On the other hand, experience had shown that the 75-millimetre gun, the backbone of the French artillery, could knock out practically any German tank at short range ; and the French were able to bring up from their reserves great quantities of these splendid weapons. Thus the military position on the eve of the new German attack, though grave and in fact critical, did not appear in advance to be desperate or without hope.

During the first two days of the great battle which opened on Wednesday, June 5th, no decisive indications of the outcome were visible on either side. On the Wednesday the German High Command communiqué claimed that German units had forced the Somme between its mouth and Ham, as well as the Aisne-Oise Canal, and had breached the Weygand Line in several places. But the French night communiqué that evening, though admitting that German tanks had passed through in places, stated that the French troops had resisted the German assaults at the strong points established farther back, and asserted that "on the whole" the attacks had been held and the Allied positions maintained.

Next day—Thursday, June 6th—battle was resumed at dawn. More than two thousand German tanks, operating in groups two hundred to three hundred strong, went forward along the 120-mile front from the sea to the Ailette Canal like a series of gigantic steel probes searching the French line for weak points against which overwhelming forces could be hurled. By this time it was clear that the fighting was developing in

four principal zones or sectors. The first, on the extreme left of the Allied line, extended along the Somme from the sea roughly to Abbeville. Here the German objective was the line of the River Bresle, parallel to and some twelve to fifteen miles south of the Somme. Beyond lay Dieppe, fifteen miles south of the Bresle and an important Allied link with supplies from across the Channel. Immediately to the east was the second sector, the area south of Amiens, where the bridgehead captured by the Germans in May provided a convenient starting-place for tank operations. From Amiens the Germans could strike south and south-west towards Beauvais, Rouen, and the Seine west of Paris. The third zone, to the south of Péronne, comprised the flat terrain—admirably suited for tanks—known as the Santerre Plateau. This zone lay east of the Amiens sector, and was itself bounded on the south-east by the sector of the Weygand Line which followed the Crozat Canal as far as the Oise. The fourth sector—still proceeding eastwards—included the strategically vital triangle of rolling land between the Oise and the Aisne, bounded on the west by the confluence of these two rivers at Compiègne, on the south by the Aisne, and on the north and north-east by the Weygand positions along the Ailette Canal and by the escarpment of the Chemin des Dames. From both these two last sectors a break-through would enable the Germans to strike at Paris either along the historic invasion route which followed the line of the Oise to its junction with the Seine west of the city, or from the north at the city direct, or against the line of the Marne to the east of the capital.

During Thursday, June 6th, the course of the struggle was not decisively unfavourable. The French night communiqué described the German onslaught as "unprecedented," and admitted that it had "submerged and outflanked" certain Allied units. The Germans succeeded in advancing in the Lower Somme or Abbeville sector and passed tank units as far south as the Bresle. In the Ailette sector also, the German attack carried them to the heights of the Chemin des Dames. But their efforts were extremely costly. Several hundred tanks were destroyed; the great concentrations in the Péronne sector did not succeed in breaking through; and French morale remained high.

On Friday, June 7th—the third day of the great battle—the tide began to turn slowly but perceptibly in favour of the invaders. In the coastal sector a German armoured column, comprising two hundred to three hundred tanks, succeeded in advancing eighteen to twenty miles south of the Bresle as far as Forges-les-Eaux, some twenty-seven miles

south-east of Dieppe on the main line to Paris, and only thirty miles north of Rouen. Tremendous German attacks were launched south of Péronne and east of Soissons. In the latter sector, the Germans, after crossing the Ailette Canal, reached the Aisne at various points ; but a French counter-attack in the early morning was successful, later German attempts to cross the river failed, and at the close of the day the French still held its southern bank. By nightfall, however, the withdrawal of French advanced elements—"in accordance with orders," to use the words of the French night communiqué—and strong reinforcements which the Germans had poured in, made the outlook distinctly unfavourable.

On Saturday, June 8th, the fourth day of what was described as "the most formidable attack in military history, far surpassing the biggest battle of 1914-18," this most violent and ferocious struggle approached its crisis. According to the French night communiqué, the Germans threw into the battle more than a score of fresh infantry divisions, reinforced by powerful artillery units, alongside the seven armoured divisions and numerous infantry divisions which they had previously employed. At dawn these forces advanced from sectors south of Amiens and Péronne against new positions between Aumale (on the head waters of the Bresle, twenty miles almost due south of Abbeville) and Noyon (on the Oise, twenty-five miles south of Péronne), to which the French had retired at the close of Friday's fighting. The Aumale-Noyon front stretched about sixty miles. Its western flank between Aumale and the sea had already been turned by the German tank column which penetrated as far as Forges-les-Eaux (fifteen miles south-west of Aumale) on Friday afternoon. At Noyon (twelve miles north-east of the confluence of the Oise and the Seine at Compiègne) its eastern flank touched the west bank of the Oise roughly at the level of the Ailette Canal, which the Germans had also crossed on Friday. With both flanks in the enemy's hands, the Aumale-Noyon position was thus strategically weak, even if Saturday's frontal German attack had failed. Nevertheless, the French defended it fiercely ; and when the furious German flood compelled the French Command at the end of the afternoon to order a withdrawal beyond Breteuil (twenty miles south of Amiens), the movement was carried out as planned, and the Germans did not succeed in breaking through. In the Aisne sector, to the east of the Oise, the Germans also made important advances on June 8th. Here, too, they threw fresh divisions and large armoured forces into the struggle. The fighting along the Aisne was as violent and

as terrible as between the Bresle and the Oise. In this sector the Germans made strategic advances which brought them across the river and gave them what the French night communiqué described—with ominous restraint—as “a considerable footing on the heights” to the south.

But if the determination and tenacity of French soldiers and officers in the field prevented the Germans from achieving a break-through on the fourth day of this fearful battle, the progress achieved in the centre in the teeth of most violent French opposition, like the German strategic gains on the western flank, boded ill for the future. The fifth day of struggle deepened the fears which the fourth day had evoked. On Sunday, June 9th, the front widened. Previously the ninety-mile sector between Soissons on the Aisne and Montmédy on the Maginot Line had been relatively quiet. This Sunday was to see it in flames. During the afternoon the Germans attacked around Pontavert (twenty-five miles east of Soissons, and only fifteen miles north-west of Rheims); while during the day the long front in Champagne, from Châlons Porcien (forty miles north-east of Soissons) to the Argonne, was the scene of a fierce German offensive which at two points broke across the Aisne, and at one of them established a bridgehead south of the river near Rethel. In the central sector between the Oise at Noyon and the Aisne at Soissons, the Germans, after an initial repulse, threw in new divisions and fresh armoured units, and advanced south of the Aisne towards the Marne and Paris. Finally, in the west the German tank column which had reached Forges-les-Eaux found itself able to push on until it threatened the Seine from Gisors (north-west of Paris, and only fifteen miles north of the river) and from Rouen, some thirty-five miles farther west.

The German advance was not discreditable to those French troops who fought hard in this tremendous contest of metal, muscle, and will. The Weygand Line was ceaselessly bombed from the air. By night the shelling was continuous and merciless. By day masses of tanks spewed jets of withering flame a hundred yards before them as they advanced to attack. Hundreds of tanks were blasted into torn and crumpled metal beneath the point-blank fire of anti-tank artillery and French 75's. Others were drilled with heavy-calibre machine-gun bullets fired into their tender tops at short range from low-flying Allied aircraft. Yet others were mercilessly assailed from the ground whenever opportunity offered—for example, by hurling in hand-grenades when German tank crews, sweltering from the intense heat and half-suffocated by the foul internal atmosphere, opened their covers for a breath of air. But however many

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were destroyed, hundreds and thousands of others clanked remorselessly on. They were reinforced by infantry massed like swarming and angry bees. According to the French military spokesman on June 9th, some forty-five German divisions were operating between the sea and the Oise ; another forty were engaged in Champagne ; while five, ten, or perhaps fifteen more were debouching in the Argonne—a total of between ninety and one hundred divisions in all. Along the whole 200 miles of the front between the sea and the Maginot Line, some 2 million Germans were attacking. Had they been spread evenly, this number would have averaged 10,000 soldiers per mile, or nearly six behind every yard of front. When every allowance is made for non-combatant units, the flood of struggling, sweating, pushing, fanaticized men driven against the Weygand Line time after time, with every aid that modern weapons in the most lavish quantities could supply, could only have been held and forced back by forces prepared, trained, armed, and led very differently from the armies which the Third Republic threw into the field in this hour of supreme trial.

Nor could the troops which Britain was able at this juncture to bring to her Ally's aid repel the invader in their sector of the front. During the Battle of France British units fought on the Somme, behind the Somme on the Bresle, and also (to anticipate our narrative a little) on the Seine. But by this time the cream of the British Expeditionary Force was back in England. No one who speaks the English tongue need ever be ashamed to avow the fact or to state the reason why. The immediate cause lay in a single word : Dunkirk. On the fields of Flanders, on the roads to that windswept town, along the sandy dunes of its beach, lay the mighty instruments of mechanical warfare with which Britain had armed these forces ; and the interval between the Flanders campaign and the Battle of France was too short for British factories to equip new forces afresh, or for new armies to be dispatched in sufficient numbers across the Channel.

If the British units still left in France were few, their conduct was not unworthy of their heritage or their cause. Attacked from the air by a hail of bombs and repeated storms of machine-gun bullets, harried front and rear by tanks, the target of shells from every kind of gun, they fought against overwhelming forces for days with dogged pluck, supreme courage, and tireless endurance. An example is the Highland Division—chosen for mention here because other published details of this campaign were still scant at the time of writing ; but an example which even

justified Scottish pride would agree was typical of British armies in the field.

The Highland Division have another name—the Glorious 51st. In the war of 1914–18 the Germans called them “the Ladies from Hell” because of their kilts. Famous regiments composed the division—the Black Watch, the Gordon Highlanders, the Seaforths, the Camerons, the Argylls. The division’s conduct in the present war is exemplified by the outcome of two actions during the Battle of France. In one the Argylls, their tanks long since destroyed, tried with rifles to hold an eight-mile front against foes armed with tonimy-guns. The remnants of one company of Argylls, surrounded for two days by the enemy, somehow with desperate gallantry fought their way through the German lines and rejoined their battalion.

The other action was the last stand at St. Valéry-en-Caux of the 152nd and 153rd Brigades and the rearguard which had been posted farther back to cover a retreat enforced by deterioration of the French position. St. Valéry is a little Norman coast town lying midway between Dieppe and Le Havre. From it many British units were evacuated after the Germans broke through the Weygand Line. These brigades of the 51st were not so fortunate. When the French, who also held a sector of the town’s defences, capitulated at 8 a.m. on June 12th, the Highlanders’ position became untenable. Tragically enough, boats which could have rescued them lay waiting off Venles-les-Roses, only four miles along the coast. But this they did not know. The beleaguered British were short of food, tired from continuous marching, worn by the great heat, wearied by many days of battle; but they were still in high spirits and full of fight. The Germans were assailing St. Valéry—or such of it as remained uncaptured after the French surrender—with fierce mortar fire, heavy tank attacks, and masses of aircraft. But the brigades fought on. At length their last shot was fired, their rifles were useless. They were ordered to destroy their guns and vehicles. They did so. And only then, when no means of fighting were left, were they at last taken. Such had been their courage and determination in this final desperate stand that at their capture the Germans themselves paid the survivors all the honours of war and treated them with marked respect. These units of the Highland division had lost this fight. But they were still the Glorious 51st.

Even by Monday, June 10th, the sixth day of the Battle of France and the day on which Italy entered the war—a development discussed more fully below—the struggle had not yet reached its maximum violence.

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According to the French communiqués, the previous fortissimo of fury increased on June 11th as the Germans sought to force a decision ; was maintained at this level on the following day, and then rose again in a fresh crescendo on both sides of Paris on June 13th to a new and final peak ; after which a certain falling off occurred. At this stage the course of events became so swift and so complex that it can be followed more easily geographically in four main zones rather than in a day-to-day account. These zones lay to the west, north, and east of Paris, and in the Champagne-Argonne area. In the first three, operations converged on the capital even while they simultaneously paved the way for further German advances. In the fourth, the attack was directed against the Maginot Line from the rear.

The struggle in the western zone centred round German efforts to cross the Seine between Paris and the sea. The valley of the Lower Seine is a pleasant, low-lying country, in which the remarkable loops and curves of the river are helpful to an enemy commanding armoured forces, while a network of good roads facilitates tank operations. On June 10th the German tank column which threatened the Seine from positions reached the previous day effected a crossing between Vernon (about thirty-five miles north-west of Paris) and Rouen (some twenty-five miles north-west of Vernon). A French artillery officer has described this operation as a participant. It began an hour or so before dawn, when a heavy German barrage opened fire on the French posts and a great black cloud swept across, screening the river. Through the cloud flat-bottomed motor-boats carrying tanks were vaguely seen. The French poured shells on them as they tried to cross. At one position, a dozen or so of these ungainly craft were sunk in each of five attempts. Anti-tank guns soon disposed of three tanks which managed to reach the defenders' bank. But the smoke screen also concealed other and more successful German efforts. At length a pontoon bridge was thrown over the river. Motorized units poured across ; and the French were left with no choice but to retire to a prearranged line farther back or be cut off.

German efforts to cross the Seine continued on June 10th and 11th. On the 10th they succeeded at several places between Vernon and Rouen. On the 11th, despite continued French resistance, German bridgeheads south of the river were securely established, and through one gap an advanced motorized detachment was actually able to push on towards the western outskirts of Paris. On the 12th, while operations continued south of the Seine, other German forces drove along the north bank

towards Caudebec-en-Caux and Le Havre. The capture south of Dieppe (i.e. largely in the St. Valéry area) of Allied forces numbering more than 20,000 (the Highland division among them)—which the Germans announced on the 12th—cleared the way to Le Havre. At some time during these three days (June 10th to 12th), the Germans also captured Les Andelys, Louviers, and Pont de l'Arche, along the Seine between Vernon and Rouen; and on the 13th German armoured and motorized columns poured over the Seine bridgeheads (crossing in especial force at Vernon, Louviers, and Les Andelys), and began to strike well into central Normandy at Evreux (fifteen miles due south of Louviers and thirty-two miles south of Rouen), Pacy-sur-Eure (ten miles due east of Evreux), and Dreux (twenty miles south of Evreux and fifty miles west-by-south of Paris). Dreux and Evreux were also heavily bombed. Thus, by the night of Thursday, June 13th, only nine days after the Battle of France began, the Germans had got farther south than Paris in the west; had largely cleared the area north of the Seine from Paris to the sea; and had opened out to the south their attack against Normandy, despite the fact that fresh British troops recently arrived from the United Kingdom were supporting the French and helping to maintain Allied morale.

While this great attack was proceeding in the west, the Germans, making no less rapid progress in the centre, were bearing down on the capital from the north. Until official accounts of the campaign are published, precision is impossible; but broadly speaking this northern sector comprised the lozenge-shaped area between the Oise, flowing from north-east to south-west on the west; the Ourcq, taking on the east a course roughly parallel to the Oise; the Aisne, flowing from east to west between Soissons and Compiègne on the north; and, on the south, the parallel line of the Marne and Seine between Meaux (near the confluence of the Ourcq and the Marne), twenty-five miles east of Paris, and Pontoise (near the junction of the Oise with the Seine), sixteen miles northwest of the capital. This undulating country contains many woods—those of Compiègne, Chantilly, and Villers-Cotterets, for example, are well known—which should have strengthened the defence and seriously impeded the invaders.

On June 10th the Germans were reported to be pushing down the valley of the Ourcq along the eastern edge of the lozenge. By June 12th their advance on the west of the lozenge had reached the small manufacturing town of Persan-Beaumont, on the Lower Oise (sixteen miles due north of Paris); and heavy German attacks were being launched

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from Crépy-en-Valois (a little north and east of the centre of the lozenge) and from Betz (some seven miles south-east of Crépy, and much the same distance west of the Ourcq). On June 13th the German attack broadened and strengthened. Between Senlis (twelve miles west-by-south of Crépy) and Betz, on a front sixteen miles wide, the Germans poured in at least twelve divisions in a formidable onslaught which seems to have broken down the French system of strong points in the area, and to have largely cleared the northern approaches to Paris.

The Oise-Ourcq sector formed the western portion of the central zone. To the east between the Ourcq and the Marne developments even more momentous were in progress. While on June 9th new German divisions were advancing south of the Aisne around Soissons, the French were preparing new strong points in this sector. On June 10th the Germans, fanning out from their positions south of Soissons, launched a heavy attack towards the Marne along a twenty-mile front from La Ferté-Milon to Fère-en-Tardenois. La Ferté-Milon (sixteen miles south-west of Soissons) lies on the Ourcq, only twelve miles north of the confluence of this river with the Marne. Fère-en-Tardenois (likewise sixteen miles from Soissons, but to the south-east) is only eight miles north of the Marne. The attack was successful ; and when on June 11th the Germans advanced again with strong tank support, they encountered only the French rearguard, which had been left behind when the main French forces retired south of the river. As events soon showed, in this sector French resistance had in fact largely broken. On June 12th, German units from the north, together with several German infantry divisions and two armoured divisions which struck south-east across the Ourcq, reached the new French defences at Château-Thierry (fifty miles east-by-north of Paris) and elsewhere along the Marne, and (to use the language of that evening's French communiqué) "succeeded in taking certain elements to the south bank." On June 13th German armoured divisions not only crossed the Marne in force along the twelve-mile stretch between Château-Thierry and Dormans, but also—tragic testimony to the feebleness of French opposition—actually pushed on in the direction of Montmirail, fourteen miles south of the river.

The German blow at the Marne was not confined to the southward stroke from Soissons through La Ferté-Milon and Fère-en-Tardenois to Château-Thierry and Dormans. In Champagne the Germans struck during this period at Rheims and the Marne, and also drove a wedge between the French forces in the Maginot Line and the rest of the French

armies. Rheims, thirty-five miles east-by-south of Soissons and almost exactly midway between the parallel courses of the Aisne and the Marne (in this region twenty-five miles distant from each other), was the strong point of the area. Some twenty-five miles north-east of Rheims is Rethel, which the Germans had captured in May soon after their breakthrough at Sedan. In this north-easterly direction Rheims is slightly protected by the Retourne and the Suppe, two brooks whose parallel courses, respectively some fifteen and eleven miles beyond the city, bring them ultimately into the Aisne. To the south-west, Rheims is approached along the valleys of the Vesle and the Ardre, two other small streams. The Vesle runs through Rheims in a westerly direction to Fismes (fifteen miles west-by-north of the city), from where its course inclines to the north-west for another twelve or fifteen miles to the Aisne at Vailly. The Ardre also flows in a north-westerly direction and joins the Vesle at Fismes.

A German attack against Fismes had been made from Pontavert to the north-east on June 9th. It was followed on June 10th by a drive down the Vesle valley from Vailly towards Fismes. On the same day the Rethel sector was also the scene of a German advance. Fresh divisions, supported by tanks and aircraft, resumed the offensive on both sides of Rethel, and extended the German bridgehead south of the Aisne as far as the Retourne—a distance of some seven to eight miles. On June 11th the Germans brought masses of heavy tanks into action in the Vesle valley, and pushed on past Fismes down the valley of the Ardre, so as (in the language of the French communiqué) “to outflank Rheims from the west and south-west.” On the Retourne fighting that day was particularly heavy. The Germans resumed their offensive at dawn along the whole course of the tiny stream—a distance of some fifteen to twenty miles ; and although the French—reinforcing their efforts by counter-attacks at Attigny on the Aisne a few miles to the north-east—disputed the invaders’ advance fiercely and stubbornly, by evening German forces had apparently succeeded in effecting a crossing.

On June 12th the Germans again flung in heavy reinforcements. According to the French communiqué, an entire mechanized corps, comprising three or four armoured divisions and two or three motorized divisions, entered the struggle west and south-west of Rheims. Their influence was decisive. That night the German communiqué claimed the capture of Rheims ; and although the French communiqué did not expressly concede its fall, the statement that the French forces “after a

bitter struggle" had "withdrawn step by step and in order to the Montagne de Rheims" (i.e. south and south-west of the city) could scarcely admit of another interpretation. To the north-east the crossing of the Retourne on June 11th was followed on the 12th by the crossing of the Sûre ; while the general breakdown of French defences in Champagne was shown by the fact that on June 13th German divisions bypassed Rheims to the east and captured Châlons-sur-Marne, twenty-five miles *south-east* of the city. Just beyond, between Châlons and Troyes, fifty miles to the south, lay the Catalaunian plains, where Attila and his Huns had been defeated fifteen hundred years earlier—in the circumstances of June, 1940, a memory both tragic and full of ultimate hope.

While the German wedge driven down from Rethel to Châlons-sur-Marne was cutting off the Maginot Line and the east from the rest of France, yet other German forces were striking at the Line itself from the rear. The first object of attack was the so-called "hinge" between the Maginot Line at Montmédy and the line of the Aisne in Champagne. This "hinge" ran very approximately from Rethel on the Aisne almost due east for some thirty miles to the Meuse at Beaumont. Montmédy, where the Maginot Line proper began, is in its turn fifteen miles almost due east of Beaumont. At Le Chesne-le-Populeux, twenty miles east of Rethel (and about ten miles west of Beaumont), is the famous gap through the heights of the Argonne. In this region the Meuse flows from south to north. Verdun, which the French under Marshal Pétain defended obstinately and successfully during the Great War of 1914-18, lies on the Meuse some thirty miles south of Beaumont.

In this sector the Germans on June 10th extended their attacks to all openings north of the wooded hills of the Argonne as far as Beaumont. The French, however, offered the most energetic resistance, defended the ground foot by foot, and counter-attacked. On June 11th, the French communiqué claimed that all the German assaults had been repulsed—a claim which the failure of the Germans to renew their offensive on June 12th on the whole confirms. But German pressure against the hinge of the Maginot Line and in the Argonne sector had by no means been broken. It had merely paused while strategically more urgent efforts were (as we have seen) being pushed through to completion in Champagne. A day or two after the period with which we are for the moment concerned, the attack in the Argonne and against the Maginot Line from the rear was again, and successfully, renewed.

## 3. PARIS SURRENDERED

Germany failed for many reasons to conquer France in the war of 1914-18. Her own defeat gave rise to heart-searching and exhaustive enquiry into its causes. High military importance was attached to the errors which played a part in frustrating Germany's first attack on Paris ; still greater weight was given to the tantalizing defeat on the Marne in September, 1914, which snatched away the victor's crown even as her armies advanced to seize it. Four years later the same fateful river witnessed a second German defeat ; and as the last German offensive ebbed in July, 1918, the counterstroke began which swept like a tide in full flood to Allied victory.

This time the Germans—always adept at learning the minor lessons of history, however blind as a nation to the great teachings of judgment, mercy, and faith—were passionately resolved that no similar mishaps should rob them of their conquest. This time, therefore, they launched the crushing weight of their armoured attack at the Marne so effectively that by June 13th, after only nine days' fighting, they were established along eighty miles of its course. At Châlons-sur-Marne they clamped down a hold which no flanking movement then practicable could prise loose. They were pursuing their broken and disorganized foe far south of the river. Their armies had gripped Paris on three sides in an iron vice that threatened ruin, destruction, and desolation as its jaws tightened.

The French Cabinet and the far-sighted (or more timorous) among the inhabitants of Paris took steps against a worsening of the military situation some days before the city was surrounded. The Cabinet's last meeting was held in the capital on Sunday, June 9th, when a civilian exodus also began. Next evening a communiqué announced the departure of the Ministers at the request of the High Command. Their destination was Tours, on the Loire, 125 miles to the south-west. Army headquarters were also moved from the Marne to Briare, another town on the Loire, 100 miles east of Tours. Paris heard the rumble of distant gun-fire on June 9th. On June 10th its sound drew nearer and deepened. On June 11th the flash of the guns was seen, and their menacing roar shook the city. As the Germans came closer, barricades of sandbags and barbed-wire obstructions blocked the streets. A creeping paralysis overtook the activities whose normal pulsating life converts an assemblage of people, an aggregation of bricks and mortar, into a city and a capital.

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The newspapers did not appear. There were no buses. Communication by telegraph and telephone with the outside world stopped.

May and June, 1940, saw Paris clad in exceptional loveliness. The plane trees in her streets wore a mantle of the most delicate green. The flowers in her gardens were rich and various. A long spell of unusually fine weather replaced the normal pearly softness of her atmosphere with sparkle and brilliance. The very beauty of the city flung down as it were a gauntlet of eternal challenge to the approaching doom which cast its death-like spell before. All this outward serenity gave an air of paradox to the actions of the early leavers, whose vehicles of all types and kinds packed the streets and roads leading to the south. Later, when the fate of Paris was clearly sealed, the external scene also changed. On June 11th, a haze of smoke drifted across the sky, the harbinger of a thick black pall which shrouded Paris from view the next day and turned the sun into a pale-green ominous disc. It came from the German lines on the Seine, where a smoke-screen of a new type was in use. Unlike older smoke-screens, between whose localized clouds clear patches usually remained, this latest product of misdirected chemical ingenuity created an evenly distributed, lead-coloured fog, smelling slightly of sulphur and incense, which cut off vision over long distances to a height of several thousand feet. When it cleared away, it left a black sooty deposit behind. To gunners this new fog set a formidable problem. It prevented other troops from seeing their targets until they burst into view at short range without warning. It cloaked Paris in such darkness that electric torches had to be used in the streets in broad daylight. And in this darkness, the more macabre because of its contrast with the clarity and light that had gone before, the last anxious thousands and tens of thousands of evacuees departed from their city into the unknown.

It is impossible to say whether the more tragic figures were those who went or those who stayed. At the railway stations the crowds were so great that people are said to have been trampled to death. The roads were blocked with motor-cars and other vehicles of every description, from new and luxurious limousines to wheezing, decrepit antiquities. The tops of many cars bore mattresses as partial but much-needed protection against the machine-gun bullets of German airmen. Some of the occupants travelled light. Most bore away such valued possessions as could be salvaged. But if the anxious fears and confusion of the leavers were bad enough, the plight of many among the multitude that stayed was far worse. Some who remained did so from a sense of duty,



MARSHAL DE LAIN

W.R. [IV]

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The majority could not go, even though they wanted to. Worst off by far were thousands who, during two turbulent decades, had found safety in Paris from dire personal danger in their own lands—White Russians ; emigré Italians, Austrians, and Czechs ; refugees from the brown Nazi fury. Many of them, with great doggedness and pluck, had rebuilt fragments of their shattered lives. Large numbers of them were marked enemies of their own Governments, doomed, if once captured, to vile inescapable torture and painful death. The apprehensions of the French were rightly grave. The lot, in fact, before them was bitter and tragic. But a special anguish none the less attaches to the fate of this sorry, helpless flotsam and jetsam of foreigners in Paris thus for a second time overtaken against all probability and calculation.

But Paris was not destined to be the scene of a desperate conflict. The erection of barricades and other preparations in the streets were waste of effort. While high authorities were asserting a defiant refusal to surrender, M. Paul Reynaud was addressing to President Roosevelt a personal message in which he declared that France would fight in front of Paris and behind Paris. But he did not say that the French Government would fight to the last *in* Paris ; and the stern resolution required to defend the capital at whatever cost was in fact lacking. Paris was *not* defended.

On June 13th, when the Germans were in the outskirts on three sides of the city, General Hering, the Military Governor, declared Paris an open town before handing over his command to General Dentz. Mr. William Bullitt, the United States' Ambassador to France, transmitted formal notice of this step to the Germans. At six o'clock the following morning French delegates reached the village of Ecouen, some ten miles north of Paris on the Chantilly road, to begin negotiations with German officers about surrender. Although empowered to hand over only the city proper and not the extensive environs which constitute the urban area as a whole, the French yielded to the German demands under threat of immediate concentric bombardment by artillery of the heaviest calibre.

The first German motor-cyclists entered Paris soon after seven o'clock on Friday, June 14th. German camera-men, radio technicians, and announcers accompanied them. These minions of Dr. Goebbels, whose duty it was to squeeze the last drop of bitterness from the French defeat into a potion that would briefly slake the Nazi lust for conquest and the German thirst for military glory, stationed themselves in the Place de la Concorde, to which the German troops would make their

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way on their triumphal progress through the city. At about a quarter-to-eight German armoured cars, tanks, and infantry advanced into Paris from the north-west. They followed the Champs Élysées to the heart of the capital. The cameras clicked. The announcers performed their boastful task. The Swastika flag was hoisted above the Eiffel Tower and above the Arc de Triomphe which commemorated the deeds of an adventurer and a conqueror greater than Hitler. This sunny morning saw victorious German hordes in the capital of France for the second time in seventy years. But the grim silence and stern faces of the few Parisians present in the deserted streets warned the invaders that, however glittering their victory might for a time appear, its foundations rested on the shifting and transient sands of temporarily superior material power.

## 4. THE ROAD TO DEFEAT

While the immediate course of armed French resistance was thus being swiftly decided in ten or twelve days of fierce fighting on the battle-fields north of the Seine and the Marne, developments in progress among a comparative handful of people behind the scenes were destined to affect the entire part played by France in the war as a whole, to exert the deepest and most far-reaching influence on French national life for decades to come, and to spread the perils and consequences of the gigantic struggle over continents, oceans, and peoples hitherto not drawn directly into the conflict.

M. Paul Reynaud became Premier of France on March 21st, 1940, during the reaction of Parliamentary disapproval over the policy which M. Daladier, his predecessor, had pursued in the Finnish War. But the composition of political parties in the French Chamber and Senate gave M. Reynaud a very qualified and precarious tenure of power. M. Reynaud himself was among the most intelligent and far-seeing of contemporary French statesmen. He was small and dapper in appearance, with a curious Mongol cast of countenance, highly energetic, and extremely courageous. His courage and energy had made him a successful Minister of Finance at a time of great difficulty. His insight and intelligence led him to become an early advocate of army reform along modern mechanized lines—a step which he urged alone among leading French politicians and which, if taken in time, might well have saved France from defeat.

But these high and distinguished qualities were unable to offset entirely certain defects from which M. Reynaud suffered, and which were particularly serious when judged by the standards of French politics.



M. PAUL RENAUD

WR IV]



Cocksureness—at least in manner—alienated many more ordinary men. Though a good speaker, M. Reynaud lectured rather than addressed his fellows. His inability to move audiences emotionally as a true orator can—and in France must—do, betrayed an intellectual over-balance which accompanied (and perhaps was in part responsible for) a certain lack of political instinct. One consequence of these characteristics was comparative political isolation. M. Reynaud commanded the devotion and loyalty of no large, important, and united section of French political life. Another consequence was a somewhat superficial judgment about matters of party politics, which in the end destroyed him. M. Reynaud, moreover, felt an intense personal rivalry towards his predecessor, M. Daladier; and the defective sense of proportion which this rivalry betrayed was not redressed by the Countess Hélène de Portes, who exerted over M. Reynaud an ever-growing and—if accounts freely published afterwards may be believed—a most unfortunate influence.

Despite the disagreement and rivalry between the two men, M. Reynaud was forced to retain M. Daladier in his Cabinet for two and a half months, at first as Defence Minister and then, after the German break-through at Sedan, as Minister for Foreign Affairs. On June 6th, however—the second day of the Battle of France—M. Reynaud reshuffled his Ministry. M. Daladier was dropped entirely. General Charles de Gaulle—widely known as a brilliant younger general, an original thinker on modern warfare, and a convinced believer in the use of tanks—became Under-Secretary of Defence, and one of M. Reynaud's principal assistants. Two other less fortunate appointments were those of M. Paul Baudoin as Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and M. Prouvost as Minister of Information. Although on June 6th certain French publicists of the Right were arrested—the only occasion on which (so far as is known) the police took action during the war against elements in French life which were favourable to Fascism or Nazism—the net effect of M. Reynaud's reshuffle was to strengthen the hand of those who were ultimately to favour surrender.

The Battle of France had been in progress for only two days before the first steps were taken in this direction. According to a pamphlet by M. Charles Reibel, as early as June 7th General Weygand urged the French Cabinet to ask for an armistice in the hope that Paris might be saved, the evacuation of the Government avoided, and Italy's entry into the war prevented. On June 12th General Weygand pressed his counsel again. Many divisions of the French Army were by this time reduced to

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only two or three battalions. The men were dropping from fatigue and want of sleep. As the Germans advanced at an accelerating pace, the supply services encountered growing difficulties in bringing munitions to the front. But according to M. Reibel—whose pamphlet was approved by the Vichy Government and who, as member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French Senate, ought to have had access to the true history of affairs—M. Reynaud's Government remained adamant in their determination to carry on with the struggle.

Unfortunately, by no means all of those associated with the Government of France at this harsh hour shared the courage and determination of her Premier. And at this juncture there occurred an event which the faltering resolve, growing fears, and temporizing hopes of the backsliders regarded as particularly dire. Fascist Italy declared war.

Great efforts had been made to prevent this development. From the outbreak of the war in September, 1939, onwards, Italy had been treated with the utmost consideration. Although she proclaimed herself "non-belligerent"—a status among non-warring nations new to international law, which, according to the usage sanctioned by centuries of armed conflict, had previously recognized only belligerents on the one hand and neutrals on the other—it soon became more than clear that Italian non-belligerency was conceived in terms of the Axis alliance, and was intended to be helpful to Germany. And so in fact it proved. Italy became the "hole" in the Allied blockade; for Italian sensibilities, coupled with Allied resolve to give the Fascist Government no occasion or excuse for declaring war, resulted in a large volume of Italian trade with the outer world, particularly in such vital materials of war as oil, much of which was credibly reported to have been later sent to a German destination. Nor did the Allies stop at considerate and indeed preferential handling in matters of trade. Their efforts to keep Italy out of the war extended to direct appeals by the British and French Governments—appeals in which the United States as the greatest and most powerful neutral also joined.

But appeals and warnings, the teachings of prudence and the dictates of sagacity, were all without effect on the distorted judgment of the Fascist dictator. "War," Signor Mussolini had written some six years earlier in an authoritative exposition of "The Doctrine of Fascism," published in the *Encyclopædia Italiana*, "war alone brings all human energies to their highest tension and sets a seal of nobility on the peoples who have the virtue to face it." And on Monday,

June 10th, 1940, Mussolini, by declaring war against Great Britain and France, decided to apply his self-defined test to the Italian people. The moment, it is true, did not seem particularly well chosen for the seal of nobility it was to place on the Italian people. France, after nearly a week of exhausting battle and agonizing punishment, was palpably reeling. Signor Mussolini doubtless regarded Great Britain and the British Empire as no less certainly on their last legs. He hoped accordingly to divide the heritage which the dissolution of both the great democracies would leave behind, and to gorge himself with the voracity of the hyena on such gobbets as his formidable German associate might allow him to seize. But if to others the "nobility" of Italian policy at this juncture was not especially conspicuous—and the view of the outside world was admirably expressed in the bitter tone (which listeners never forgot) and biting phrase with which President Roosevelt described in a public speech how "the hand that held the dagger struck it into the back of its neighbour"—the moment did appear to be well chosen. Machiavellianism—of which the Fascist dictator was a consistent and life-long disciple—is essentially the code of the political failure. But Machiavellianism does at least instruct its pupils to pick their time with care. However base the results, Signor Mussolini no doubt thought that he had learnt this lesson thoroughly. Even here, however, the ultimate outcome was to teach him otherwise.

The first foretaste of this lesson came when Canada (on June 10th) and Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India (on the 11th) declared war on Italy. But the real power and effectiveness of Dominion and Indian forces were not to be fully brought home to the Italians for many months. The larger implications of Italy's entry into the war belong, indeed, to the next volume of this history, where they will be examined in greater detail. In the European theatre the Italian effort limited itself to minor air activity and to suffering heavy blows at the hand of the Allied air-forces—subjects with which we are not here concerned; and also to trifling activities on land against the south-eastern frontier with France which at least provided material for the Italian writers of communiqués as well as for the more imaginative flights of Fascist propagandists. Thus, the Italian communiqué of June 24th asserted that "the formidable enemy defences built into the rock on the high mountains, the strong reactions on the part of the enemy who [oddly enough!] was firmly decided to oppose our advance, and the bad atmospheric conditions did not check the advance of our troops, who

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scored notable successes everywhere." But whether in this sector or farther south on the Mediterranean coast, attempts to check the alleged Italian "successes" even on quite a large-scale map yielded little more than the conviction that special training in lyric composition must have formed an important part of the curriculum which Fascist discipline imposed on its staff.

Italy's entry into the war, the fall of Paris, and the growing disintegration of French military resistance were only three among the flood of devastating problems which at this time were descending on the rulers of France. It is useless to try to unravel the separate influence of these varied and tragic events. The Italian declaration of war struck a heavy blow against those Frenchmen—to a large extent members of the propertied classes—who had long cherished dreams of what they called a "Latin brotherhood"—a grouping of France, Italy, and Spain which, in some ill-defined way, was to offset and counterbalance the power both of Germany and of Great Britain. The fall of Paris had wider and more serious effects. Paris was not merely the centre of organized French life ; it was also a symbol possessing the deepest emotional significance for the whole nation. A shudder of horror ran throughout the civilized world at the thought of what was here overthrown—

The expectancy and rose of the fair state,

The glass of fashion and the mould of form,

The observ'd of all observers, quite, quite down ;

while France itself received a spiritual shock which shook the country to its foundations.

It is conceivable—though the suggestion belongs to the realm of historical might-have-beens—that the rulers and people of France could have withstood even these heavy and bitter blows and gone some way towards stemming the tide of military disintegration but for two more urgent, pressing, and intractable problems which the Reynaud Government encountered at Tours. The first was the utter inadequacy of administrative arrangements ; the second was the flood of refugees.

Tours, the first seat of the French Government after leaving Paris, is a small provincial town with a population numbering some 75,000. The French Government stayed there from June 10th to June 15th—four vital days. M. Reynaud's own headquarters were in an old château some miles outside the city. The château lacked most of the facilities which an efficient centre of modern government requires. Tours itself

was not much better off. It was hopelessly overcrowded. The arrangements made in advance proved patently and grossly inadequate when they came to be used. Accommodation was short. Most of the complex network of communications, ordered files, and known surroundings was lacking. Habits became unsettled. Old-established routines—always more important to efficient government than hasty reformers usually realize—were completely broken. The Germans bombed the nearby aerodrome during the few days that Tours served as capital. Their attack added the sharp edge of tension if not of temporary panic to the existing confusion. At Briare, 100 miles to the east, Army Headquarters suffered similarly from grave and abnormal difficulties. Military communications also became slow, uncertain, and inadequate. Information was belated and scrappy. On June 11th, for example, reports, obviously emanating from the French military spokesman, claimed that the French defensive system was generally intact and that in the Oise sector the French were still holding Noyon, Compiègne, and Soissons—and this on the very day when the French High Command communiqué admitted German advances many miles farther south!

In a similar atmosphere of ignorance, perplexity, confusion, uncertainty, and shock prevailing throughout France, the problem of refugees swelled to intolerable proportions. It was a problem barely a month old. The first refugees comprised the comparatively few inhabitants of Eastern Belgium who fled before the Germans when the storm of invasion burst on the west on May 10th. As the Germans swept across Belgium, so the crowd of refugees grew. The French and British Armies on their way into Belgium found the refugees increasingly troublesome. By the end of the Battle of Flanders, when the remnants of the smashed and routed Ninth French Army joined the fleeing civilians, what had begun as a mere trickle became a freshet and then a spate. At this stage so experienced, cool, and level-headed an observer as Lieutenant-General Sir Douglas Brownrigg, the Adjutant-General of the British Expeditionary Force, described the flood of refugees as "frightening." Even then they filled and blocked the roads, disturbing plans, obstructing supplies, and hampering military movements.

Still worse was to come. A deep, nameless dread of the German invaders inspired this tragic migration. German conduct confirmed the initial dread. On the highways, for example, German tanks deliberately knocked down and rode over the defenceless beings they encountered, leaving crushed, torn, and mangled bodies behind—the fortunate among

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them being the dead. German airmen sought out the refugees and machine-gunned them from the air in cold blood. This utterly callous and inhuman cruelty converted dread into terror. Both were highly contagious. When refugees reached a new town or village, they infected its inhabitants with panic in turn. Spies and traitors increased the confusion. Men became incapable of distinguishing friend from foe and foe from friend. The swiftness with which events moved made impossible the tests and checks by which credentials are normally established. Authority itself broke down, and the officials of local government often added themselves to the rising tide of fleeing humanity which in less tempestuous circumstances they would certainly have striven to stem.

The evacuation and fall of Paris added yet further hundreds of thousands to the flood. In vehicles of every kind, on horseback, on bicycles, and afoot, men, women, and children swarmed southwards along every road. As the small supplies brought away with them were consumed, they lacked even food and drink—to say nothing of shelter or the most elementary provisions of civilized life. Uprooted from their surroundings, without objective, destination, or goal, they merely drifted, a bewildered, impoverished, terrified, and anguishing array. Though an accurate count was obviously impossible, and though the estimate may have been on the high side, the French Minister for Refugees himself ultimately put their number as high as 6 million souls—a seventh of the total population of France. To settle, provide, and arrange for them constituted a task whose urgency brooked no delay, and which no Government worthy of the name could postpone or neglect, however pressing its other preoccupations.

## 5. THE DEFEATISTS AT WORK

It was in these circumstances that the Government of France began to edge away from the path of continued resistance and took the first serious steps in the direction of surrender. As we shall presently see, organized military resistance crumbled and collapsed while this new course was shaping. But the initial moves were made even before Paris had actually fallen.

On June 11th, the day after Italy declared war, Mr. Churchill, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Eden, the Secretary of State for War, General Sir John Dill, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and other high British officials flew to Tours for consultations with the

French Government. They remained in Tours on the 12th, and received black and obviously disquieting reports about the French military position, as well as about the defeatist currents in French political circles. On the 12th the French Cabinet, meeting after the British representatives' departure at the Château de Cange, M. Reynaud's headquarters, some ten miles from Tours, learnt from General Weygand's own lips that the military situation had in fact become desperate. According to one well-informed authority, General Weygand stated his belief that it was no longer possible to prevent a German occupation of all France, and that for military reasons it was highly advisable to request an armistice. He is said to have argued as well that he considered social disorders to be imminent—a fear which, whether well or ill founded (and on this matter General Weygand clearly possessed no special competence), weighed heavily with many members of M. Reynaud's Cabinet. The upshot of this meeting was a decision to invite Mr. Churchill to visit Tours again.

Severe as was the pressure and tremendous as were the problems beating in on the French Government, the French Republic was not free either at this or at any subsequent stage to seek an armistice or make peace without the prior consent (on terms to be decided) of the British Government. This restriction was imposed by the Anglo-French Agreement adopted by the two Governments at the sixth meeting of the Allied Supreme War Council held in London on March 28th, 1940. The Agreement embodied the following "solemn declaration":

"The Government of the French Republic and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland mutually undertake that during the present war they will neither negotiate nor conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement. They undertake not to discuss peace terms before reaching complete agreement on the conditions necessary to ensure to each of them an effective and lasting guarantee of their security. Finally, they undertake to maintain, after the conclusion of peace, a community of action in all spheres for so long as may be necessary to safeguard their security and to effect the reconstruction, with the assistance of other nations, of an international order which will ensure the liberty of peoples, respect for law, and the maintenance of peace in Europe."

No undertaking could be clearer, broader, or more binding, either in the letter or in the spirit; or could apply more definitely both to the war, however it might develop, and to the subsequent peace.

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Mr. Churchill returned to Tours as requested on June 13th. He refused the suggestion that he should meet the whole French Cabinet to discuss with them the possibility of seeking an armistice—a proceeding which would obviously have put him in a completely false position—and saw instead M. Reynaud, the Premier, and M. Georges Mandel, the Minister of the Interior and one of the staunchest and most resolute advocates of resistance. By five o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Churchill, Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, and Lord Beaverbrook, the Minister for Aircraft Production (who had accompanied him), had left for home; and MM. Reynaud and Mandel reported to the French Cabinet on their conversation with the British Ministers.

At this point the record of events—which had not been fully published at the time of writing—becomes obscure. There are at least two versions of what happened; and since dispute about this transaction may well prove a source of bitterness in years to come, it is important, even at the early date at which this text is written, to be as clear as possible about the points at issue.

According to the French version, which was published at Bordeaux on June 24th by M. Prouvost, the High Commissioner for Propaganda, M. Reynaud informed his Cabinet colleagues that

"In the first place, in agreement with Lord Halifax and Lord Beaverbrook, Mr. Churchill declared that the British Government would continue, as in the past, to give France the maximum military, air, and naval aid in their power; but that if events obliged France to ask Germany for an armistice, their opinion was that in no case would England reproach her Ally in difficulties, and would understand the situation in which she found herself, very much against her will."

Nevertheless (M. Prouvost's statement continues), the French Cabinet decided to postpone their request for an armistice for twenty-four hours until President Roosevelt could reply to the "supreme appeal" which France was to make, and until the British Government could be informed about the situation and its consequences "even more precisely" than before. The Prouvost statement goes on to accuse "certain French Ministers, in particular M. Mandel, who had received no mandate from the [French] Government" of intervening with the British Government "so that the declarations of Mr. Churchill, Lord Halifax, and Lord Beaverbrook were not maintained, and Great Britain took a much less

understanding and more imperative [sic; the meaning is presumably 'exacting' or 'peremptory'] view of the situation."

The accusation against M. Mandel and other unnamed French Ministers bears the obvious stamp of partisanship; and since it concerns French internal politics, we need not further examine it here. An official British reply, made in London on June 25th, said, however, that M. Prouvost's statement—which also dealt with military points not here referred to—was "inaccurate throughout and misrepresents the attitude of this country." Mr. Churchill dealt with the general subject of the French request for an armistice and British policy with regard to this step in two speeches in the House of Commons. On June 18th, before the armistice had been granted, Mr. Churchill said that

"The French Government will be throwing away great opportunities and casting away their future if they do not continue the war in accordance with their treaty obligations, from which we have not felt able to release them."

A week later, on June 25th, when the French had accepted the German terms, Mr. Churchill, after recounting M. Reynaud's argument and request for British consent to armistice negotiations by the French, summarized his own reply as follows:

"Although I knew [Mr. Churchill said] how great French sufferings were, and that we had not so far endured equal trials or made an equal contribution in the field, I felt bound to say that I could not give consent. I think there would be no use in adding mutual reproaches to the other miseries we might have to bear, but I could not give consent. We agreed that a further appeal should be made by M. Reynaud to the United States, and that if the reply was not sufficient to enable M. Reynaud to fight on—and he, after all, was the fighting spirit—then we should meet again and take a decision in the light of the new factors."

Between M. Prouvost's and Mr. Churchill's versions there is thus agreement (*a*) that on June 13th the French Cabinet had already half made up its mind to ask for an armistice; and (*b*) that this step was to be postponed pending a further and final appeal by M. Reynaud to President Roosevelt. But M. Prouvost, the spokesman on this occasion of the Bordeaux—later the Vichy—Government, omits any reference either to further Anglo-French consultation before the French Cabinet should take the decisive step of actually requesting an armistice, or to the essential fact

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that this request could only be made honourably with the concurrence of, and on terms laid down by, Great Britain.

On the evening of June 13th, M. Reynaud prepared the "new and final appeal" to President Roosevelt on which the French Cabinet had decided earlier that day, and to which the British Ministers had agreed. The text of the appeal—which was in fact not actually dispatched until the following morning, whether because of the confusion prevailing at Tours or for other reasons—has not yet (April, 1941) been published; but in a broadcast that night M. Reynaud made known what must have been its general terms. The broadcast was a sombre, ominous, and tragic message. It called for "clouds of war planes" to fly over the Atlantic and "crush the evil force that dominates Europe." It asked whether the American people "hesitate still to declare themselves against Nazi Germany." It spoke of the sufferings of France and said bluntly that the time had come when the world must pay its debt for the gifts France had made to the human spirit. In declaring that "our fight, each day more painful, has no further sense if in continuing we do not see even far away the hope of a common victory," it just fell short of despair. Only the faith of the concluding words—the phrases of which betrayed between their lines the clear nature of France's tragedy—redeemed the French Premier's last address to his people from the final defeat of spiritual surrender.

"In the great trials of our history [M. Reynaud ended] our people have known days when they were troubled by defeatist counsel. It is because they never abdicated that they were great. No matter what happens in the coming days, the French are going to suffer. May they become brothers. May they unite about their wounded fatherland. The day of resurrection will come."

But however moving this message, however cogent M. Reynaud's appeal to President Roosevelt, the actual requests of France simply did not make sense. In the then state of American preparations and production, it was as useless to ask for "clouds of war planes" as to call for all nine moons of the planet Jupiter; and President Roosevelt was unhappily compelled to imply as much in his reply, which was discussed two days later at a meeting on June 15th between himself and the French and British Ambassadors in Washington. In his answer to M. Reynaud's appeal, the President pledged redoubled efforts towards every possible moral and material assistance "so long as the Allied Governments

continue to resist." But apart from promising also that the United States, in accordance with its established policy, would not recognize any territorial changes effected by the force of German arms, he could do no more for the time being. The President's reply ended with the words: "I know that you will understand that these statements carry with them no implication of military commitments. Only the Congress can make such commitments";—language which was to exercise an unfortunate influence on French policy a day later.

Nor was the British Government able at this juncture to increase substantially the volume of its immediate aid. Great Britain, like the United States, could and would—and was to—help enormously in the months to come. For the moment, British assistance was limited by the output of its own factories and by the urgent claims of defence against near and threatening peril. The will to fight is, however, something different from the means of battle; and the British Government, in a message dispatched on June 13th after Mr. Churchill's return home, proclaimed to the French Government, the French and British peoples, and the entire world their inflexible resolve to stand by France morally and to assist her materially to the utmost extent of Britain's growing power. After paying full tribute to "the heroic fortitude and constancy of the French Armies" against enormous odds, this important document—its text and style testifying almost without question to Mr. Churchill's own hand—went on to promise that

"Great Britain will continue to give the utmost aid in her power. We take this opportunity of proclaiming the indissoluble union of our two Empires. We cannot measure the various forms of tribulation which will fall upon our peoples in the near future. We are sure that the ordeal by fire will only fuse them together into one unconquerable whole."

"We renew to the French Republic our pledge and resolve to continue the struggle at all costs in France, in this island, upon the oceans, and in the air, wherever it may lead us, using all our resources to the utmost limits and sharing together the burden of repairing the ravages of war."

"We shall never turn from the conflict until France stands safe and erect in all her grandeur, until the wronged and enslaved States and peoples have been liberated, and until civilization is free from the nightmare of Nazidom. That this day will dawn we are more sure than ever. It may dawn sooner than we now have the right to expect."

That the "indissoluble union" here proclaimed was more than a

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phrase to the British Government was to appear three days later at Bordeaux.

The French Government left Tours for Bordeaux on June 14th; and on Sunday, June 16th, the Prefecture at Bordeaux was the scene of the most momentous decision France had ever taken in her long and varied history. The Cabinet held three formal meetings, and was in fact in almost continuous session. So far as can be discerned from the incomplete material available at the time of writing, four main factors bore directly and immediately on French policy on this critical day; while in addition a large number of other influences in the general background of personalities, interests, and attitudes played out their important and—in many cases—sinister rôles.

The first factor was President Roosevelt's reply. As regards the immediate dispatch of material help, the reply was regarded as unsatisfactory, even though what was offered was in fact recognized to be as much as could be promised in the circumstances. But the President's reference to the power of the American Congress to prevent military commitments by the United States produced a potent and unfortunate reaction. France had never forgotten the disappointments she suffered from the refusal of the American Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles or the Tripartite Anglo-American-French Treaty of Guarantee which France very reluctantly accepted during the peace negotiations of 1919 in lieu of a frontier on the Rhine. To be informed at this critical stage that full-fledged American aid must depend on the unpredictable policy of the same organ of American Government was therefore to reopen old wounds, to revive ancient fears, and to give long-cherished resentments new life; and in the hands of those members of the French Cabinet who favoured early surrender, President Roosevelt's reference to Congressional powers consequently became a strong argument against further struggle.

The second factor was the pledge in the Anglo-French Agreement of March 28th that France would not negotiate or conclude an armistice except with Britain's agreement and consent. M. Reynaud communicated with Mr. Churchill on this fateful Sunday, told him that the American response was not satisfactory, and requested France's formal release from her obligations under the Anglo-American Agreement. A meeting of the British Cabinet was immediately convened, and in reply a message was sent, the general substance of which Mr. Churchill made known on June 25th.

This part of the story is best told in Mr. Churchill's own words to the House of Commons

"Separate negotiations [the British Prime Minister said], whether for armistice or peace, depended upon an agreement made with the French Republic and not with any particular French administration or statesmen. They therefore involved the honour of France. However—and this was in view of what one saw of all they had suffered and of what were the forces working upon them—provided that the French Fleet was dispatched to British ports and remained there while negotiations were conducted, His Majesty's Government would give their consent to the French Government asking what terms of armistice would be open to them. It was also made clear that His Majesty's Government were resolved to continue the war, and altogether cut themselves out of any association with such enquiries about an armistice."

When it is borne in mind that the withdrawal of France from the war must have been seen at this stage of affairs very possibly to involve the simultaneous withdrawal of the French Empire (which in the event proved to be the case) ; when it is considered how important an influence the component territories of the French Empire exerted upon the general strategy of the war ; and when it is realized that even in April, 1941, when this text was being written, anxiety as to the ultimate dispositions of a large part of the French Fleet had not yet been removed, then it is difficult to regard this message from the British Government to the French Republic in its hour of trial as other than understanding and generous.

British sympathy with France did not stop with restoring to the French their freedom of negotiation subject to this one condition about the French Fleet. The British Government, picking up at this moment an idea which, though not new, had never before been cast into such definite form, offered to conclude a solemn Act of Union between the two countries ; and this proposal constituted the third factor with which the French Cabinet had to deal immediately on this grim Sunday.

The idea of an Act of Union was communicated to the French Government in the form of a draft Declaration. The draft provided that "at this most fateful moment in the history of the modern world" the two Governments should make "this declaration of indissoluble union and unyielding resolution in their common defence of justice and freedom, against subjection to a system which reduces mankind to a life of robots

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and slaves." The draft declaration went on to make this proposal definite in a series of clauses which grappled courageously with concrete details.

"France and Britain [it said] shall no longer be two nations but one Franco-British Union. The constitution of the Union shall provide for joint organs of defence, foreign, financial, and economic policies. Every citizen of France will immediately enjoy citizenship of Great Britain, every British subject will become a citizen of France. Both countries will share responsibilities for the repair of the devastation of war, wherever it occurs in their territories ; and the resources of both shall be equally, and as one, applied to that purpose."

Thus the general and future provisions which this document envisaged. As regards the immediate, practical problems confronting both countries, the proposals were no less specific.

"During the war [the Declaration continued] there shall be a single War Cabinet, and all the forces of Britain and France, whether on land, sea, or in the air, will be placed under its direction. It will govern from wherever it best can. The two Parliaments will be formally associated."

The Declaration pointed out with truth that the nations of the British Empire were already forming new armies. Meanwhile, France was to "keep her available forces in the field, on the sea, and in the air." The Union would appeal to the United States for economic reinforcement, and would ask her "to bring her powerful material aid to the common cause." Finally, the full forces of the new Union were to be brought to bear against the foe. "The Union will concentrate its whole energy against the enemy, no matter where the battle may be. And thus we shall conquer."

That Britain would have benefited if this project had won acceptance in Bordeaux and if in consequence the forces and Empire of France had continued to fight is, of course, obvious. But Britain would have given very much in return ; and that not for a term of months or years, but permanently. How the balance of gain or loss would have finally appeared must now for ever remain conjectural. But it is neither carping nor unfair to point out that, determined as Britain was to prosecute the war against Germany to victory, what was offered to the Government at Bordeaux was by no means a mess of pottage in exchange for the French birthright.

The French Government, however, did not see matters in this light ; nor is it necessary for the moment to go into the reasons why the proposed declaration of Union was not merely rejected but was also actually regarded in some French quarters with contumely. Its bitter opponents cried out that Britain was striving to turn France into " a Dominion "—a singularly ignorant, untimely, and inept comment to come from men who apparently neither realized the complete independence and equality of status which the British Dominions enjoy, nor yet comprehended how dismal and degraded a servitude the policy they were advocating would in fact shortly inflict on their own country. Whatever the cross-play of motive, the outcome was the same. The proposal of union was negative at Bordeaux ; and with this decision the third immediate factor in the way of an armistice was disposed of.

The last of the immediate factors was the incredibly swift and deplorable worsening of the military situation, the development of which during the period of about two and a half days since the first entry of German troops into Paris we shall presently review in greater detail.

The examination and discussion of all these vast and difficult subjects, as well as the slow, painful process of adjusting to new and very different conditions the minds and spirits of men accustomed to the sense of their own power, naturally took a good deal of time. As Sunday, June 16th, wore on, however, it apparently became clear that the French Cabinet was almost equally divided between those who favoured continuing the war, if necessary from North Africa, and those who urged prompt surrender. According to the incomplete information available at the time of writing, the group of stalwarts included MM. Mandel, Campinchi, Delbos, Monnet, Marin, and Dautry. Politically, some of these men belonged to the Left and others to the Right. They are said to have been supported outside the Cabinet by MM. Herriot and Jeanneney, the Presidents of the Chamber and Senate respectively ; while Admiral Darlan, the head of the French Navy, is understood to have desired at this time to continue the war at sea and from French North Africa. The group which favoured surrender, on the other hand, was led by Marshal Pétain, the Vice-Premier, and was strengthened by the military authority of General Weygand. This group apparently regarded the Nazis as invincible ; and, besides their other reasons for yielding, they urged that Britain, too, would soon succumb to German blows. Outside the Cabinet, the yielders received—for it scarcely seems polite to say that they enjoyed—the support of the sinister Laval. Yet a third

group in the French Cabinet actually managed to vacillate to the very last. They are understood to have included M. Camille Chautemps.

The final and decisive Cabinet held on this fateful Sunday assembled about ten o'clock at night. Earlier meetings had exhausted argument and there was little more to say. All that remained was to take a decision. Twenty-four men voted on the proposal that France should ask Germany for terms. There were thirteen votes in favour, and eleven against. The majority was narrow but sufficient. M. Reynaud resigned, Marshal Pétain became the new Premier of France. By 11.30 p.m. the French wireless had reported the change of Government to the world. That same night Marshal Pétain saw Señor Lequerica, the Spanish Ambassador (with whom M. Laval is believed to have been previously in touch), and requested his Government to convey to the German Chancellor the French desire to learn the German terms for an armistice.

## 6. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE FALL OF PARIS

When the Spanish Ambassador and the Spanish Government were asked to transmit the French request to the German Government, the military position of France was in truth worse than desperate. On June 14th, the day that Paris fell, the German High Command had issued a communiqué which correctly stated that "the second phase of the gigantic campaign in the West has been victoriously concluded"; pointed out that "the resistance of the French northern front has broken down"; and announced the beginning of "the third phase, pursuit of the enemy to entire destruction." Events were soon to show that these words were not idle. In the days that immediately followed, the advance of German forces took place over a gigantic front, which by now encompassed practically the entire breadth of France from west to east, at a speed which proved that, despite fierce if somewhat desultory fighting in certain sectors, organized French resistance was no longer a directed and living whole.

On June 14th, for example, the French communiqué admitted that the Germans were advancing in the direction of Romilly on the Seine and St. Dizier on the Marne—respectively sixty miles south-east and 120 miles due east of Paris. In this sector the German communiqué of the 14th claimed only the capture of Vitry-le-François on the Marne, midway between Chalons-sur-Marne (which had been taken on June 13th) and St. Dizier, and twenty miles nearer than St. Dizier to Paris; but it stated that, west of Paris and north of the Seine, Le Havre had fallen; that in

the Argonne to the north-east the famous Mort Homme hill near Verdun, and Montmédy, "the corner-stone of the Maginot Line," had been taken ; and that German troops had also assembled on the Saar front "for the frontal attack on the Maginot Line." On June 15th the French communiqués claimed that west of Paris and south of the Seine fighting continued in Normandy around Louviers and Evreux ; but admitted that to the east of Paris the Germans had crossed the Seine in the Romilly area, had increased their pressure in the region from Troyes on the Seine (twenty miles south-east of Romilly and ninety miles south-east of Paris) to St. Dizier on the Marne, and had pushed advance guards in the direction of Chaumont (which lies on the Marne forty miles south of St. Dizier and fifty miles east-by-south of Troyes). In Alsace the French night communiqué announced a German attack in the region of Neuf Brisach (which lies near the Rhine, just east of Colmar and half-way between Basle and Strasbourg) ; and made the very ominous admission that "some [German] detachments succeeded in crossing the Rhine without breaking our position of resistance." The German communiqués of the 15th added little to this geographical picture, though they did claim the capture of both the town and citadel of Verdun and the breach of the Maginot Line to the south of Saarbrücken after heavy fighting. According to the German afternoon communiqué of the 15th, the breach was made on June 14th at Saaralpen, some seventeen miles due south of Saarbrücken, when (in the language of the communiqué)—

" fortification works, bunkers [i.e. pill boxes], and artillery and infantry positions, including army columns, were attacked the whole day [from the air] with bombs of all calibres. At the same time, troops strongly supported by artillery broke through the fortress battlefield of the Maginot Line and wrenched many defensive works from the enemy. The strong fortification of Saaralpen was captured."

June 16th saw the continuation of this incredible German progress. To the west of Paris, in the region of Laigle (seventy-five miles west of the capital) and La Ferté-Vidame (fifteen miles south-east of Laigle), the Germans (according to the French military spokesman) apparently did not wish for the time being to push forward their advance to the west ; and in this area the French night communiqué of the 16th claimed that the German attack had been contained, and that French troops had launched counter-attacks. Elsewhere, however, the German forces showed no such purely tactical restraint. They crossed the Seine

between Melun and Fontainebleau, only twenty-five miles south of Paris. Their advanced units swept on to Auxerre, Clamecy, and Avallon in Central France, roughly 100 to 120 miles south-east of Paris. Farther east, they crossed the Langres Plateau. German tank columns and motorized units reached the region north of Dijon (175 miles south-east of Paris) beyond the Langres Plateau, and light German units crossed the Saône at Gray (thirty miles east of Dijon). The German communiqué of the 16th claimed that this movement cut off French forces which were retiring from the Rhine and the Saar ; and also stated that "the strong fortifications in the neighbourhood of Longuyon"—i.e. near the northern termination of the Maginot Line proper at Montmédy—had been captured and the Upper Rhine forced "on a wide front east of Colmar."

By the night of Sunday, June 16th, when the newly formed Pétain Cabinet made its first definite move towards an armistice, the military position of France had thus, for all practical purposes, become hopeless. The situation at this moment is most clearly defined in terms of a line drawn across France south of the Breton peninsula from the mouth of the Loire to Basle on the Swiss frontier. From west to east this line is some 450 miles long. Paris lies about 100 miles north of the line on a perpendicular which approximately bisects it. Calais lies some 230 miles to the north (and some 130 miles north of Paris) roughly on the same perpendicular. To the south, the distance from the line to the Spanish frontier is 350 miles. Bordeaux is 140 miles north of the Spanish frontier. Of the 450-mile stretch from the sea to Swiss territory at Basle, some 250 miles from St. Nazaire to Clamecy constituted the base of a wedge which was in French hands. The wedge included Brittany, part of Normandy, and other departments between Normandy and the Loire. At the east of the line, a gap some seventy-five miles wide between Basle and Besançon was also for the moment in French hands. But the whole vital 125-mile central stretch between Clamecy and Besançon was under German control. To the north, the Germans had occupied Paris and all of France between the Channel, the Seine, and the Marne ; they had both turned the Maginot Line and breached it in several places ; the French forces retreating from this area of eastern France were in danger of being cut off ; nor was any barrier visible, whether natural or human, which promised definitely to stop the southward and westward sweep of the armoured German flood.

At this stage the chief military question was whether the various detached and widely separated armies that France still had in the field

would be able to resist effectively enough to alleviate the terms which the conqueror intended to impose. In some areas, officers and rank and file alike had sheerly disintegrated. But in many other sectors doughty fighters remained who were still battling with all the fierceness and tenacity for which French soldiers are justly renowned.

Unfortunately, one of Marshal Pétain's first acts, far from heartening these last strongholds of resistance, created fresh confusion among many of the troops whom his words reached, as well as throughout wide areas of civilian France. On Monday morning, June 17th, the Marshal made his first broadcast as Premier.

"I have assumed to-day the direction of the Government of France [he announced]. It is with a heavy heart that I say we must cease the fight. I have applied to our opponent to ask him if he is ready to sign with us, as between soldiers after the fight and in honour, a means to put an end to hostilities."

At first this broadcast was interpreted as meaning that the war was over. The Germans, however, soon put an end to this idea; for the Berlin wireless, among other threats and warnings, stated categorically that "the pursuit of the French Army will continue." That evening M. Baudoin, the Foreign Minister in Marshal Pétain's Cabinet, removed any misunderstandings that may have remained. France has not abandoned her arms, he said, in a broadcast on the situation. Although ready to seek an honourable peace, France "will never be ready to accept shameful conditions which would mean the end of spiritual freedom for her people." And the French High Command communiqué later that night made substantially the same point. "At all points of contact [it stated] our troops are still fighting with the same bravery for the honour of the flag."

This was true; but the Germans nevertheless continued to advance at a rapid pace. On June 17th the relative German pause in the Normandy sector ceased and there was fighting at Laigle and at Châteaudun (sixty miles south-east of Laigle and seventy-five miles south-west of Paris), a town on the Loir, a tributary of the River Sarthe which itself flows into the Lower Loire near Angers. In the centre the French night communiqué announced violent fighting along the ninety-mile stretch of the Middle Loire between Orléans and La Charité (thirty miles south-west of Clamecy); but claimed that German detachments which had crossed the river had been contained on the parallel lateral canal

## THE FALL OF FRANCE

which runs along part of its course. The German communiqué of the 17th asserted that many of the Loire bridges had been bombed, and that congested French troop columns around these bridges had been bombed and machine-gunned. East of the Loire the Germans advanced beyond Autun (fifty miles south-east of Clamecy) and entered Dijon (seventy miles almost due east of Clamecy and forty-five miles north-east of Autun). Farther east still, the German communiqué stated that the Swiss frontier had been reached beyond Besançon, and that the retreat of French forces from Alsace and Lorraine had thereby been cut off. Besançon is roughly forty-five miles almost due east of Dijon ; and the Swiss frontier is a further thirty miles south-east of Besançon. In the Lorraine sector the Germans announced that their troops were approaching St. Mihiel (on the Meuse, twenty miles south of Verdun), and had captured Sarrebourg, Dieuze, and Château Salins, some thirty-five miles south and south-west of Saarbrücken "in spite of the stubborn resistance offered by the enemy at certain points." A special communiqué subsequently issued from Hitler's Headquarters stated that the great fortress of Metz had also surrendered to a German division.

The next day, June 18th, saw further large German advances. In Normandy the Germans crossed the River Orne (which flows northward into the Channel) at several places between Caen, on the Orne, and Le Mans, a town on the Sarthe 130 miles south-west of Paris and only some forty-five miles north of the Loire. Advanced German units captured Cherbourg and Rennes, the old capital of Brittany, 250 miles west-by-south of Paris and eighty-five miles west of the Caen-Le Mans line. The German communiqué of June 18th stated that Rennes was the scene of a particularly successful German air attack against the railway station, where it claimed that whole trains containing munitions or fuel were blown up by bombs at a time when the station was crowded with military transport of all kinds. According to the French military commentator, there was fighting at Avranches (at the south-eastern corner of the Gulf of St. Malo), fifteen miles north of Rennes ; while the French communiqué of June 18th similarly reported fighting at Châteaudun. Farther east, the German communiqué announced the advance of German units on the Loire south-east of Nevers (itself fifty-five miles due west of Autun), as well as the capture of the huge and vital armaments centre of Le Creusot (twelve miles south of Autun). The great fortress of Belfort (thirty-five miles west of Basle) fell into German hands ; in the Upper Rhine sector, Colmar was taken ; while the capture of Metz was followed by an attack



GENERAL WLYGAND

WR - IV

[60]



from the rear against sectors of the Maginot Line which the French were still defending on both sides of Thionville (Diedenhofen), fifteen miles north of Metz.

But the French still did not give in; and during the evening of June 18th Marshal Pétain as Premier and General Weygand as Commander-in-Chief issued an order that all French forces on land, at sea, and in the air were to continue resistance at the side of Great Britain until there was assurance that the Germans and Italians would agree to an armistice on reasonable terms. At 6.30 that evening the French wireless—incidentally broadcasting a significant announcement that, according to information which had reached the French Government, German columns were flying white flags with the obvious intention of misleading French troops who were still fighting—also issued a strong warning that negotiations had not yet begun, and that it was therefore the duty of French forces everywhere “to continue resistance.” On the other hand, the effectiveness of further opposition was seriously curtailed by another official proclamation declaring all French cities and towns whose populations numbered more than 20,000 to be “open towns”—a step which, though taken to save them from German bombardment, in effect handed these places over to the enemy.

The position on June 19th was summarized in a French semi-official statement. “Under mass attacks by armoured divisions and the German air-force [it said], the extended front of our armies has for several days past been cut into several sections.” In the west (it continued), the French forces under the command of General de la Laurencie and General Langlois were fighting rearguard actions while withdrawing partly into Brittany and partly south of the Lower Loire. In the Brittany sector the French night communiqué announced that the Germans were pushing in the direction of Nantes on the Loire, fifteen miles from the mouth of the river. In the central sector (according to the semi-official statement), the French armies which were fighting around Paris under the command of Generals Hering, Frère, and Touchon, attempted to hold the Germans along the Middle Loire, and then withdrew according to orders “to establish themselves in more favourable positions” farther south. About the Champagne armies, which apparently were very badly broken by the weight of the German attack, the statement says no more than that, “outflanked on either side by German armoured divisions, [they] tried to break through in the direction of Dijon.” These efforts by the Hering-Frère-Touchon armies w

tunately not successful ; for the French communiqué of the 19th admits a French withdrawal south of the Middle Loire ; a German advance at certain points to the River Cher (in this sector, roughly fifty miles south of the Loire), and, a little farther east, a drive of German elements in the direction of Roanne, Lyons, and Ambérieux. Lyons, in wealth and general importance the second city of France, lies on the Rhône, seventy-five miles south of Le Creusot (which the Germans captured the day before) and 120 miles south of the St. Nazaire-Basle line. Roanne is in the valley of the Loire, forty miles west-north-west of Lyons, while Ambérieux is fifteen miles due north of Lyons.

The most difficult task was that confronting the French armies in Lorraine, under the commands of Generals Condé and Bourret, and in Alsace, under General Laure. The Lorraine armies had formed their battalions into squares and, while the Germans attacked ceaselessly from the east, north, and west, these gallant forces steadily resisted as they tried to withdraw step by step from the west of the Vosges towards the south. The army of Alsace was also endeavouring to carve a way through German forces across its path. Unfortunately, the triumphant claims of the German communiqués of June 19th indicate some of the difficulties which these French armies faced. In the extreme south of the Franco-German frontier along the Rhine, German armoured and motorized divisions from Belfort were uniting west of Mulhouse (twenty-three miles east-by-north of Belfort and nineteen miles north-west of Basle) with other German forces which had already attacked across the Upper Rhine. Farther north, just west of Lorraine, the great French military centre of Nancy (thirty miles due south of Metz) was captured, as well as the fortress of Toul and the important town of Lunéville (respectively fourteen miles due west, and fourteen miles south-east of Nancy). French resistance on both sides of Thionville continued ; but that night the Germans entered Strasbourg and hoisted the Swastika flag on the cathedral.

So swift and so devastating were the military developments of this period that few details about the actions of groups or individuals reached the outer world. But those who loved France nevertheless rejoiced that the French authorities, maintaining even in their own agony the chivalrous traditions that are an imperishable glory of France, found detachment enough to praise certain outstanding deeds of their Allies and fellow-fighters. On June 19th, for example, the French wireless paid special and deserved tribute to the courage with which Polish forces were fighting. A striking example was the action of a couple of thousand

Polish soldiers who covered the passage of French refugees to Switzerland. "We came to France to avenge our country," these men said; and with superb courage they attacked a column of German tanks, set them on fire with bottles of benzine and, refusing to retire, stood their ground until all were killed. The will to revenge is normally no bedfellow for Christian virtues; and it therefore requires more than an earthly casting of accounts to determine whether this heroic stand was inspired solely by the impassioned patriotism for which Poles are renowned, or whether it belongs also to those deeds of which it is written: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

June 20th and 21st saw a consolidation of the German gains rather than large fresh advances. In Brittany the German communiqué of the 20th announced the capture of the great French naval base of Brest. German forces reached the Lower Loire between Nantes and Tours and crossed the river at several points. The French communiqué of the 20th stated that German reconnaissance units had been pushed south of the Loire beyond Nantes. Beyond the Middle Loire the German pursuit continued in the Cher sector, with air attack reinforcing ground action. According to the same French communiqué, enemy reconnaissance units had been pushed beyond Bourges (sixty miles south-by-east of Orléans) towards Montluçon and Vichy (respectively fifty-five miles south and eighty miles south-east of Bourges); in the direction of Nantua (twenty miles due west of the Swiss frontier opposite Geneva), and south of Lyons. The fall of Lyons was admitted by the French wireless on the 20th. On the 21st, apart from local encounters in the region of Clermont-Ferrand (twenty-five miles south-west of Vichy and eighty-five miles due west of Lyons) which the French communiqué announced, no further advances were reported in the western or central sectors. One incident in the German work of consolidation is, however, tragically indicative of the confusion on the French side. At Nevoy, near Gien, the Germans announced on June 21st the capture of 700 new tanks. Gien is only some five miles from Briare, where French Army Headquarters were situated for a time; but no explanation is available as to why these tanks, which the French Armies needed so badly, remained at Nevoy to be captured unused instead of being flung into battle against the foe.

On the eastern front German progress during these two days was more substantial. The French communiqué of the 21st reported rather too optimistically that in the Vosges French troops "formed into a vast square, vigorously carry on the fight." But according to the more

detailed German communiqués, in the Vosges-Moselle area generally, "remnants of the defeated French Eastern Army were either taken prisoner or driven still closer together" (communiqué of the 20th); while next day these remnants had again "been separated into several parts by [the German] attacks," though "a few of the surrounded enemy groups [were] still holding out in the western Vosges" (communiqué of the 21st). Elsewhere on the eastern front the Germans claimed (on the 20th) the capture of Epinal (thirty-five miles south of Nancy on the River Moselle), as well as yet another breach of the Maginot Line west of Wissembourg (a town just west of the elbow which the Lorraine frontier made as it turned sharply south along the Rhine). In the Maginot Line on both sides of Thionville there was still fighting on the 20th, while on the 21st the Germans spoke of the "obstinate resistance" of the French survivors in this sector.

During the five days between the night of June 16th when the Pétain Government made its first approaches to Germany about an armistice, and the night of June 21st, when the German conditions were in French hands, the Germans had thus consolidated their hold on France until it was unshakable, and had also made large further advances. In terms of the Loire line between Nantes or St. Nazaire and Basle, they had practically completed the conquest of Brittany and Normandy in the west, and had started operations south of the Lower Loire. In the east, they had cut off and almost destroyed the French Armies in Alsace and Lorraine (including the specialized troops of the Maginot Line) and only minor mopping-up operations remained. And in the centre they had struck a further 120 miles south across a front approximately 100 miles broad between, say, Clermont-Ferrand and the Rhône Valley south and east of Lyons. From the French standpoint, the military position was indeed hopelessly irretrievable.

Though developments during the remaining three days of active hostilities are not militarily important, they deserve a brief notice for the sake of completeness. In Brittany, a German communiqué of June 22nd announced the capture of the ports of St. Malo and Lorient (on the south Breton coast). Independent sources state that British naval forces and the French authorities completely demolished St. Malo harbour, seriously damaged the aerodrome, and destroyed large petrol reserves before the town was taken. South of the Lower Loire, the French communiqués of the 22nd acknowledge local engagements at Ligueil and Chatillon-sur-Indre (respectively twenty-five miles south and thirty-five miles south-

east of Tours), as well as the advance of German reconnaissance units in the direction of Poitiers (sixty miles south-west of Tours) and Laroche-sur-Yon (thirty-five miles south of Nantes and eighty-five miles west of Poitiers). In the centre, there was fighting at Roanne on the Upper Loire and at St. Etienne (thirty miles south-west of Lyons); while in the Rhône Valley the German southward thrust towards the Isère strengthened, though at Andance, thirty-five miles south of Lyons, a sharp fight ended in the repulse of a German battalion, including tanks, by a detachment of Spahis. In Alsace and Lorraine, German communiqués of the 22nd announced the surrender of about 500,000 French troops "after offering bitter resistance," and claimed that only sporadic fighting still continued in scattered places in the Maginot Line and the Vosges. On the 23rd there was no notable change in the situation, though the German communiqué announced the capture of St. Nazaire, and the French communiqué admitted a further German advance along the Atlantic coast in the direction of Rochefort, Saintes, and Cognac. These towns lie on the River Charente, some ninety miles south of the Loire; while Rochefort is about twenty-five miles north of the broad estuary of the River Gironde.

June 24th was the last day of active hostilities. Six communiqués—three French, two German, and one Italian—on the 24th and the 25th give details of the day's events. In sum, the Germans took Rochefort and La Rochelle, and occupied the Atlantic coast from Royan on the north bank of the Gironde estuary to Angoulême on the Charente, sixty miles east of Royan. North of Poitiers a great camp and ammunition depot fell into their hands. In Alsace and Lorraine further scattered French detachments surrendered, and the Germans captured more fortifications in the Maginot Line. South-west of Lyons, the Germans took St. Etienne and Annonay, a town in the Rhône Valley six miles west of Andance, the scene of the successful Spahi stand of the 22nd. In the Savoy, a German communiqué speaks of the "tough resistance" which German forces had to break before they could advance on Grenoble (sixty miles south-east of Lyons) and Chambéry (fifty-five miles east-by-south of Lyons), or reach Aix-les-Bains (fifty-five miles due east of Lyons).

It is extremely difficult to ascertain just what the Italians did manage to accomplish; but during their fourteen days of war against France, they apparently made a few small advances in the Alpine border areas and occupied Menton, which is on the Mediterranean coast one mile

from the Italian frontier. In the Alps the farthest Italian advance seems to have been (according to a French communiqué of June 24th) "a little farther than Lanslebourg" (some three miles north of the frontier near the Mont Cenis pass); though the Italian communiqué of the 24th also claims "the fort of Chanaillet, near Briançon." Briançon is some five and a half miles west of the frontier, and some thirty miles south-west of Lanslebourg. No French source confirms this claim. As for Menton, the last official French communiqué issued on June 24th states that "in front of our defence line a counter-attack resulted in our recapturing the western half of Menton."

Thus, when hostilities ceased on the night of June 24th—or, to be precise, at 12.35 a.m. (French summer time) on Tuesday morning, June 25th—the Italians may have advanced as much as five miles in one or two small sectors. The Germans, on the other hand, had overrun more than two-thirds of France.

#### 7. ARMISTICE

Events in the field were far less important during the last eight days of fighting than the plans, acts, and decisions of Hitler, Mussolini—at this stage of the war not yet an entirely negligible figure—and the Pétain Government at Bordeaux and its supporters. On June 18th the two dictators conferred at Munich for over four hours, presumably about the procedure and terms to be presented to the French. That evening it was reported from Madrid that the decisions taken at Munich were being communicated to the Pétain Government via the Spanish Ambassador to France; and at nine o'clock on the morning of June 19th, after a period of tension which a number of air-raid warnings heightened, the French Cabinet met under the chairmanship of President Lebrun to consider the German reply. During the night of June 19th the Pétain Government, once more communicating by way of Madrid, dispatched a message to Berlin naming the four plenipotentiaries whom it had appointed to receive the German terms. The message was delayed in transmission and did not reach Hitler at his Army Headquarters until 4 a.m. on June 20th. The German Chancellor gave instructions as to where and how the French representatives should present themselves; and later, during the morning of the 20th, they left Bordeaux on their slow and somewhat troubled journey.

The most complete secrecy about arrangements and prospective terms had meanwhile been preserved both in Germany and France. As

regards arrangements, all that trickled out during these anxious days of waiting was that the Germans did not intend to have Italy play any part at their meeting with the French. As regards terms, though no forecasts of any kind were allowed to appear, there were (as usual) conflicting but none the less significant indications of the spirit prevailing among the conquerors. Thus the *Berliner 12 Uhr Blatt* wrote on June 19th : "The old Europe was the product of the blind and furious hatred of a Richelieu and a Clemenceau. The new Europe will be built by the love and faith of the Führer." The *Völkischer Beobachter*—though this Nazi Party organ can scarcely have felt shamed by "the love and faith" which Hitler showed, for example, to Czecho-Slovakia or Poland—limited itself on June 19th to saying that Germans are not revengeful [*sic !*], but that they "have at last ceased to be good-natured German blockheads." A Berlin spokesman, putting German intentions in their truer colours, emphasized that nothing less than the complete capitulation of France would satisfy Hitler. The best summing-up appeared on June 20th in the *Nachtausgabe*, which wrote briefly and for once with complete truth : "The hour of pity in Europe is past."

The Germans announced their terms to the French representatives in the Forest of Compiègne, some forty miles north-east of Paris, on Friday, June 21st, 1940. The occasion marked one of the great military triumphs of history ; and the Germans set the scene to suit their sense of its importance—and to wipe out as well their own rankling memories. At the close of the last struggle between France and Germany, Marshal Foch, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies, received the delegates of Imperial Germany in his railway coach on a siding at Rethondes, a village in the Forest of Compiègne, and informed them there of the conditions on which the victorious Allied and Associated Powers would cease hostilities against their vanquished foes. This meeting took place on November 8th, 1918—the day happened also to be a Friday—and the Germans had never forgotten any of the circumstances. In June, 1940, therefore, the representatives of France were summoned to the same railway coach drawn up at the same spot. Only the men—and the rôles—had changed.

Hitler arrived at Compiègne just after three o'clock. He was still wearing his dirty, smudged field uniform. Near Foch's railway coach stood a plaque which commemorated the victory of 1918. On this occasion the war flag of the German Reich covered it. Before the plaque flew Hitler's personal standard. Hitler climbed into the coach and sat

down in Foch's chair. In attendance around him, the architect of the Third Reich's victory, were the builders whose work he had directed—Field-Marshal Hermann Goering, Head of the German Air Force ; Colonel-General Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command of the German Army ; Colonel-General Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army ; Grand-Admiral Erich Raeder, Head of the German Fleet ; Joachim von Ribbentrop, Foreign Minister of the Third Reich ; Rudolf Hess, Deputy Leader of the National-Socialist Party.

At half-past three, when all was ready, the members of the French delegation were shown in. Four men represented the French Republic on this tragic day—General Charles Huntziger, Rear-Admiral Maurice Leluc, General-of-the-Air-Force Bergeret, and Léon Noel, formerly French Ambassador to Poland, another of Hitler's victims. The Germans were seated around a rectangular table. When the French entered and saluted stiffly after their national manner, the Germans stood up and responded with the Nazi salute. Both groups seated themselves, General Huntziger facing Hitler. Neither French nor Germans spoke a word until Hitler nodded to General Keitel, who rose and read in German the preamble to the armistice terms. As soon as he had finished Hitler, still silent, left the coach. It was forty-two minutes past three in the afternoon. As he descended the steps, a German military band broke into the noble strains of Haydn's hymn to which German national egotism at its most expansive had set the idolatrous, boastful words of "Deutschland über Alles." Outside the coach, Hitler reviewed a guard of honour, saluted, and stepped into his car. The supreme moment of his career to date had lasted a little less than a quarter of an hour. History and the British people, under God, were to settle whether that moment did not also mark the beginning of his downfall.

The four French delegates remained in the railway coach while a translation of the preamble and terms of the armistice was read to them. A little later they withdrew to the tent which had been assigned them to discuss the position and report to their Government through a field telephone placed at their disposal for the purpose. Shortly after six o'clock they returned to the coach to resume with General Keitel conversations which continued intermittently through the evening.

That same night, during which the preamble to the armistice terms alone was published, a curious incident took place which threw a searching light into some of the deepest recesses of German character. At Compiègne, besides Foch's railway coach, there were naturally certain other memorials

to Germany's defeat in 1918. After the armistice meeting of June 21st, 1940, Hitler ordered the removal to Berlin of the coach and a French monument, and the destruction of all but one of the other memorials of 1918. The exception was a monument to Marshal Foch.

In this act the secular pattern of the German public mind really did repeat itself. Hitler and a whole generation of Germans proved utterly unable ever to reconcile themselves to the sheer fact of Germany's defeat in 1918. Its memory, indeed, rankling and festering psychologically, was among the ultimate causes of the war of 1939. But German incapacity to face and accept unpleasant facts was unfortunately no new phenomenon. Nearly two thousand years before the historian Tacitus recounted the earliest known example of this trait. During the years A.D. 14 and 15, the great Germanicus was obliged to undertake frontier campaigns against the turbulent and aggressive German tribes beyond the Roman province of Gaul. After one great battle, in which the slaughter of the enemy lasted from early morning till late at night, the Roman legions erected a mound to commemorate their signal victory. On the mound they placed captured German arms as trophies, with the names of the vanquished people inscribed below. And the result? The mere sight of this reminder of their defeat (writes Tacitus) filled the Germans with such anguish and rage that they abandoned their plans to withdraw beyond the Elbe and attacked again. The psychological parallel could scarcely be closer.

The preamble to the armistice terms of June 21st, 1940, evidenced the same incapacity to face facts. On a solemn, historic occasion it attempted to perpetuate the legend of Germany's undefeated surrender in 1918 and of her subsequent "betrayal" through the alleged breach of Allied promises. This tissue of lies provided an important layer in the magic carpet on which the Nazi Party ultimately soared to power. When the German forces laid down their arms in November, 1918 (the preamble stated), "the enemy had not defeated the German Army, Navy, or Air Force in any decisive action." This is not the place to rehearse in detail the unchallengeable facts of Germany's defeat *in the field* in 1918. But it is altogether too much to pass without comment this deliberate, pernicious falsehood, this monstrous libel on the brave Allied soldiers, sailors, and airmen who perished in battle in their hundreds of thousands in order that Imperial Germany should be overthrown and that freedom should live. There is no need for a roll-call of the "decisive actions" in which the Allied and Associated Powers defeated all three branches of the

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German armed forces. The first and second Battles of the Marne, Verdun, Jutland; the establishment of Allied supremacy in the air—none of these examples (to mention no others) need be examined afresh. The evidence of Germans uncorrupted by Nazi poison would alone establish the facts. German regimental histories show how casualties and desertions reduced regiments by the closing period of the war from an establishment of 3,000 to a strength of some 200. A German Colonel—Schützinger by name—testified in a book entitled *Collapse (Zusammenbruch)* that “we collapsed in August, 1918, and on the battle-field, not in consequence of the revolution in the homeland which followed the collapse” (italics mine). “We were beaten for purely military reasons [Colonel Schützinger says]. It was not the homeland, but the fighting forces of our opponents which brought our Armies to ruin.” And a conversation on November 8th, 1918, between Hindenburg and General Gröner (who succeeded Ludendorff as First Quartermaster-General after the latter had shuffled off his command and responsibilities rather than face their consequences) provides authoritative enough evidence from the German side, if that is needed. In the opinion of these supreme and informed German military authorities,

“The formations at the base were corrupt through and through, and even the Army in the field showed signs of disintegration. Corps in a state of dissolution and hordes of deserters, to the number of many thousands, were storming the railways at Liège and Namur.”

In his own memoirs, Prince Max of Baden, who took over during Germany’s simultaneous political collapse the thankless task of trying to make the best possible terms for his vanquished country, records from the German press of January 27th, 1919, this unimpeachable testimony to Germany’s *military* defeat.

Other untruths which the armistice preamble of June 21st, 1940, contained—such as the astoundingly perverse falsehood that Great Britain and France declared war on Germany in 1939 “without any reason”—untruths which demonstrate once again the same fundamental incapacity to face and accept unpleasant facts—need not here be further examined. But the adroitness with which one vital passage was framed deserves to be carefully noted. This adroitness is characteristic alike of Hitler’s exceptional political insight and (on occasion) of the subtlety of his methods.

The preamble concludes as follows :

"France, after heroic resistance, has been defeated and has collapsed after a unique series of terrible battles. Germany does not therefore propose to give to the terms or negotiations for an armistice the character of insult to so brave an opponent. The objects of German demands are (1) to prevent a resumption of hostilities ; (2) to provide for all necessary safeguards to Germany for the continuation of the war forced on her by Great Britain ; (3) to create the necessary conditions for a new peace, the basic elements of which shall be reparation of the injustice committed by force against the Reich."

In the fourteenth century the great Froissart wrote that the Germans "are covetous people above all other" and that "they have no pity if they have the upper hand." The deliberately vague but ominous language of the preamble's last three clauses ought to have been warning enough that Germany's demands would fully confirm Froissart's accuracy. On June 21st, 1940, however, Hitler's problem was not what he could get from France, but how he could get the most with the least trouble. Hence all the characteristically Hitlerian touches in this passage—French resistance "heroic" ; the series of battles "unique" ; neither terms nor negotiations to be an "insult" ; France "so brave an opponent" ; the war really "forced on her by Great Britain" ; and therefore the *suggestio falsi* that Germany's terms, after all, need not be too bad—touches which saved French pride, salved French susceptibilities, weakened advocacy of continued resistance, and consequently eased the task of making acceptance palatable (or, at least, not impossible) to the French public.

Hitler's political deftness was indeed necessary. On the one hand, the stakes were enormous. They included the French Fleet (without which it was clear that German success against Britain would be much more difficult) ; the large and far-flung French Empire, with its strategically invaluable positions and its substantial powers of troublesome resistance ; and the advantage of avoiding complete military occupation and administration of the whole of France. On the other hand, though the Pétain Government had taken on June 16th the fatal step of asking what Germany's terms were, it had not yet formally accepted those terms ; and its insistence that the armistice must be "honourable"—whatever this word may have signified to the many at Bordeaux who mouthed it ; or to the old Marshal, whose intentions appear indeed to have been upright, but whose age and failing capacities had impaired his judgment —meant that refusal was still possible.

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Between June 16th and 21st a good deal of pressure was brought to bear on the new French Government at Bordeaux to remind it of its obligations, and to point out the ultimate benefits to France of carrying on the war from overseas as other nations were doing whose lands the Germans had also overrun. The full history of these wise, far-seeing, and friendly efforts was not known at the time of writing ; but though a full account had not then been published, there were no doubts at least as to the main outlines of British policy during this crisis.

Mr. Churchill first learnt that the Pétain Government had been formed—" for the prime purpose [to use Mr. Churchill's own words to the House of Commons on June 25th] of seeking an armistice with Germany "—when he was actually in the train on the first stage of the journey to Bordeaux which M. Reynaud before his own fall had invited the Prime Minister to make.

" In these circumstances [Mr. Churchill continued] we naturally did everything in our power to secure proper arrangements for the disposition of the French Fleet. We reminded the new Government that the condition indispensable to their release [from the provision of the Anglo-French Agreement of March 28th, 1940, that neither of the two countries should make a separate peace, or even negotiate for this purpose, without the prior consent of the other] had not been complied with, the condition being that they should be sent to a British port. There was plenty of time to do it ; it would have made no difference to the negotiations, and the terms could hardly have been more severe than they were. In order to reinforce the earnestness with which we held our views, we sent the First Sea Lord [Sir Dudley Pound] and the First Lord [of the Admiralty, Mr. A. V. Alexander, M.P.] as well as Lord Lloyd [the Colonial Secretary] to establish what contacts were possible with the new Ministers."

Mr. Alexander, Sir Dudley Pound, and Lord Lloyd were in Bordeaux on June 19th. They saw Marshal Pétain, M. Baudoin, the Foreign Minister, and other French politicians. They are reported to have renewed earlier offers that British warships and other vessels would help to transport French troops and officials to North Africa, from which further resistance could be organized. It is true that Sir Ronald Campbell, the British Ambassador to France, was never able to secure from the Pétain Government a formal assurance regarding the French Fleet—for had such an assurance been obtained, it would certainly have been published at the time. But the promises which the British visitors did

receive from men of high place and authority in the Pétain Government were such that Mr. Churchill told the House of Commons (on June 25th) that, although "everything was, of course, fusing into collapse at that time," nevertheless "many solemn assurances were given that the [French] Fleet would not be allowed to fall into German hands."

The British were not alone in urging the Pétain Government to fight on. Inside France, it is true, the extreme rigour of the censorship—whose instructions on this point were plainly framed at the behest of ministers and men determined to have "peace" at any price—prevented the French people, stunned as they were by the tempest which had so swiftly overwhelmed them, from grasping the real significance of the request for an armistice. Nor was the veil of deliberately imposed ignorance lifted until June 21st—the black day of the Compiègne meeting—when the public were informed for the first time that they faced unconditional surrender. The *Petite Gironde*, an important Bordeaux newspaper, pointed out that this had to be made clear so that, "when the truth can no longer be concealed," there should be "no brutal reactions" among the people. In these circumstances, there could naturally be no widespread popular movement of revolt. Even so, it is clear that in these dark hours certain influential Frenchmen did their best to urge on the Pétain Government the course of resistance and honour. And these voices at home were reinforced by some French voices from abroad. On June 20th, for example, the small but influential French colony in Yugoslavia, headed by the French Minister, unanimously decided to telegraph President Lebrun about the armistice. "Refusing to accept any surrender," the message read, the colony "beseeches you to break off immediately the *pourparlers* with the enemy." On June 22nd the French colony at Beirut in Syria telegraphed in similar terms. It implored the French leaders "to make every effort to continue the struggle, in company with our Allies and with the Anglo-French fleet, in the territories of the French Empire . . . which intend to continue an indomitable resistance." Nor can these two messages—which were among the few to be published in the outside world—by any means comprise the total of those which the Pétain Government must have received during these days of anguish and confusion. It is ignorance alone—an ignorance which the men of Bordeaux deliberately imposed and fostered—that prevents the record from being lengthened.

On June 20th the hopes of the friends and lovers of France were momentarily raised a little. A fresh crop of rumours emerged from the

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spiritually infected city which was the country's momentary capital. The Pétain Government (which had practically decided the day before to go to Perpignan) was now reported to be ready to leave Bordeaux, perhaps for Biarritz, perhaps for North Africa. If true, these reports meant that renewed and honourable resistance had been decided on. But the Germans, well aware of the risks for them which such a step would entail, took the right action to prevent it. Although Bordeaux had been declared an open city, in the early morning of June 20th it was twice severely bombed. The threat of worse to come was enough. No more was heard of Biarritz or North Africa or resistance.

The German terms reached Bordeaux during the evening of June 21st. The Pétain Cabinet met to consider them shortly after midnight. No details about this meeting, or about the discussions that continued throughout the day, were known to the outside world as late as April, 1941; but the event showed soon enough what was decided. The French plenipotentiaries, who had spent the night in Paris, returned to Compiègne at ten o'clock in the morning. They were in touch with their Government throughout the day. A few minor amendments which the French proposed were accepted. German patience, however, was growing short. At 6.30 p.m. General Keitel sent a written demand for a final answer within an hour. General Huntziger, the Head of the French delegation, reported this development by telephone to Bordeaux. The Pétain Government gave their assent; and at 6.50 p.m. on June 22nd the armistice was signed by General Keitel for Germany and General Huntziger for France. The Pétain Government had travelled nine-tenths of its journey on the road to surrender.

The remaining tenth lay across the terrain of Italian demands; and was to prove more favourable. The signature of the Franco-German armistice did not bring hostilities to a close. Fighting was to stop only when France had also come to terms with Italy. This stipulation—a concession which Hitler doubtless granted Mussolini at their Munich meeting on June 18th—was on the one hand tantamount to an avowal of Italian weakness; and on the other hand enabled Hitler to bring pressure on the Italians should it prove necessary to make them abate their claims. From Hitler's standpoint the provision was a wise one. If Germany had conquered France, Italy had not. Italy's military successes against France had, in fact, been trifling, not only by comparison with what Germany had achieved, but also by any reasonable objective standard; and French contempt for the Italians was so general and so strong that

excessive Fascist claims might have jeopardized the Franco-German armistice even at this late hour, and despite the fact that French soldiers were still losing their lives. Moreover, whether Italy was strong or weak, Germany was bound to gain by playing the two Latin countries off against each other ; and even a defeated France, if her Government was in malleable hands, should prove helpful to further German schemes of conquest either as a complement or an alternative to Italy until final German victory had been won on such a scale that both client states could be treated with like harshness and arrogance.

When the French delegation reached Rome on June 23rd, they therefore found themselves in a very different position from that at Compiègne ; and the formal proceedings actually had a slightly comic touch which underlined the difference. In the Italian negotiations, the French delegates comprised the same four men as were accredited as plenipotentiaries to the Germans, with the addition of General Parisot, a former French military attaché in Rome. The Italian delegation consisted of Count Ciano, the Foreign Minister ; Marshal Pietro Badoglio, Chief of the General Staff ; Admiral Domenico Cavagnari, Naval Chief of Staff ; General Francesco Pricolo, Chief of the Air Staff ; and General Mario Roatta, Army Corps Commander.

The Villa Incisa, some twelve miles from Rome, was the scene of the negotiations. As with the Germans, proceedings opened with mutual salutes. But whereas according to the immemorial custom of war Hitler, as conqueror of France, was rightfully present and in charge at Compiègne, Mussolini (who had not conquered France) did not deign to attend the Villa Incisa in person. In the absence of his father-in-law and Chief, Count Ciano presided. But the absent Duce clearly intended to dominate the meeting ; and when discussions started Count Ciano rose and announced that, in accordance with Mussolini's orders, Marshal Badoglio would communicate the armistice conditions to the French. At Compiègne General Keitel, as Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command of the victorious German Army, had not disdained to read the German text himself. But at the Villa Incisa Marshal Badoglio abstained from this duty, and called on General Roatta to read the Italian terms instead. Whether the Marshal took this course because, as a competent professional soldier, he was keenly conscious of what his armies had *not* done, or whether some other and less creditable motive inspired him, the result was the same. The sheer overweeningness of these melodramatic histrionics, far from proving impressive—at all events to those who read about them

afterwards—was merely ridiculous. And as even the outward course of the subsequent negotiations showed, the French on their side were by no means taken in.

After General Roatta's reading, General Huntziger asked to be allowed to convey the Italian conditions to the Pétain Government. Together with his fellow delegates he then returned to the Villa Manzoni (some seven miles nearer Rome) where the French were being lodged. After discussions among themselves that night and the following morning, the French plenipotentiaries returned to the Villa Incisa in the afternoon of June 24th. The full Italian delegation awaited them. But as the hours passed and as high Italian officials drove back and forth between the Villa Incisa and Mussolini's office in the Palazzo Venezia, it became clear that this time the French did not merely accept the text originally laid before them. What happened at these negotiations is still not exactly known. But when the terms of the armistice with Italy finally appeared, it was quite evident that, though the Fascist Government may have been reaching for what it regarded as the stars, it by no means succeeded in grasping them.

Agreement was at last reached late in the afternoon. At 7.15 p.m. the Franco-Italian armistice was signed. Marshal Badoglio affixed his signature for Italy; General Huntziger again signed for France. At 7.35 p.m. the Government of the Third Reich were formally notified; and the armistice between France and Germany accordingly came into force. The German authorities ordered that hostilities against France should cease six hours later (on June 25th, at 1.35 a.m. German summer time, which was identical with 12.35 a.m. French summer time). In the language of a special communiqué issued in Berlin at 9 p.m. on June 24th : “The war in the West is therefore ended.”

This grandiloquent language was somewhat premature. Against France, Germany had indeed won a tremendous victory. As regards “the war in the West,” however, the German draftsman had apparently left out of account the small matter of British resistance. Fortunately his oversight was one which the British people and their armed forces could—and did—soon repair.

#### 8. THE TERMS AND THEIR MEANING

The German and Italian armistice agreements were drawn on broadly parallel lines.<sup>1</sup> Both agreements required fighting against Germany and

<sup>1</sup> For full texts of the two Armistices, see pages 154–162 in the chapter “The Diplomatic War.”



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Italy to stop at once when hostilities formally ceased both in France itself and in French colonies, possessions, and mandates overseas. Apart from this obvious provision, the most important clauses concerned the occupation and demilitarization of French territory, the future of the French Fleet, and the prevention of French military recovery.

The main difference between the two agreements lay in their territorial provisions. A fairly large-scale map is required to follow these exactly ; but, broadly and approximately, the Germans demanded the occupation of a wedge-shaped area along the French Atlantic coast from the Spanish frontier northwards almost to Tours on the Loire, and of the *whole* of France north of a line drawn very roughly—and disregarding various quite important bulges and curves—from Tours south-east to the Swiss frontier at Geneva.

The Italians, on the other hand, did not secure the cession of *any* French territory, either in Europe or overseas. They were obliged to content themselves instead with the demilitarization of extensive and important frontier zones. In France, the demilitarized zone extended fifty kilometres (say, thirty miles) “as the crow flies beyond the Italian lines proper.” In view of the trifling Italian advances during actual fighting, this was practically equivalent to a zone west of the Italian frontier and fifty kilometres broad—*i.e.* roughly from the Riviera coast just east of Cannes northwards towards Grenoble and Chambéry (which were west of the zone) and the Swiss frontier south of Lake Geneva. On the Libyan-Tunisian frontier, the demilitarized zone was defined on a map which was not published ; but it obviously covered the strong French fortifications in Eastern Tunis. In Algeria and the French African territories to the south which bordered on Libya, the demilitarized zone was to be 200 kilometres (say, 120 miles) broad, measured from the Libyan frontier. All these territories were to be demilitarized for “the duration of the armistice.” The coast of French Somaliland was to be “entirely demilitarized” “for the duration of hostilities between Italy and the British Empire and for the duration of the armistice.” No time limit whatever attached to another provision about East Africa, viz. that “Italy shall have full and constant right to use the port of Jibuti [in French Somaliland] with all its equipment, together with the French section of the Jibuti-Addis Ababa railway, for all kinds of transport”—*i.e.* military as well as commercial. Finally, the period of hostilities between Italy and Britain was set to the demilitarization of the maritime fortified areas and naval bases of Toulon (in France), Ajaccio (in Corsica),

Bizerta (in Tunis), and Oran (in Algiers, 270 miles west of Bizerta). Demilitarization was to be completed within fifteen days.

The armistice with Germany not merely defined the areas of France which German forces were to occupy and conferred on the Third Reich "all rights of an occupying power." It also deepened humiliation by obliging the French Government "to support with every means the regulations resulting from the exercise of these rights and to carry them out with the aid of the French administration." It demanded the surrender, "undamaged," of land and coastal fortifications in the occupied territory, together with the plans of these fortifications. It required the French Government to turn over to German troops in the occupied region all facilities and properties of the French armed forces, in undamaged condition; also harbours, industrial facilities, and docks; also transportation and communication facilities. It placed on the French Government the duty of performing "all necessary labour to restore these facilities"; and of seeing to it that the necessary technical personnel and rolling stock of the railways, as well as other transport equipment, should be retained in service "to a degree normal in peace time." Nor was any term set to all this; for Article 3 of the Agreement stated explicitly that it was "the intention of the German Government to limit the occupation of the West coast, after ending hostilities with England, to the extent absolutely necessary"—a provision that, in the event of a German victory, bore all the marks of permanence on its face.

The future of the French Fleet (so far as this lay within the control of Germany and the Pétain Government) was dealt with in Article 8 of the German armistice agreement. The text of this vital Article reads in full as follows:

"The French war fleet is to collect in ports to be designated more particularly, and under German and (or) Italian control, there to be mobilized and laid up—with the exception of those units released to the French Government for protection of French interests in its colonial empire. The peace-time stations of ships should control the designation of ports.

"The German Government solemnly declares to the French Government that it does not intend to use the French war fleet which is in harbours under German control for its purposes in war, with the exception of units necessary for the purposes of guarding the coast and sweeping mines. It further solemnly and expressly declares that it does not intend to bring up any demands respecting the French war fleet at the conclusion of a peace.

" All warships outside France are to be recalled to France, with the exception of that portion of the French war fleet which shall be designated to represent French interests in the colonial empire."

The Italian armistice agreement contained similar provisions.

Other maritime clauses required the French to give the exact location of all mines ; to sweep them away if requested ; and in any event to render harmless within ten days all mines in the four Mediterranean maritime areas and naval bases to be demilitarized under the Agreement with Italy. A clutching hand was also laid on French mercantile shipping. French merchant vessels in French ports were not to leave them " until further notice " without the consent of the German or Italian Governments ; while vessels elsewhere were to be recalled or directed to neutral ports.

The provisions designed to paralyse or prevent any recovery of French military strength were most far-reaching and stringent. They supplemented the clauses dealing with the occupation and demilitarization of French territory and with the future of the French Fleet. French land, sea, and air forces were to be demobilized and disarmed. The only exceptions comprised units (whose strength Germany and Italy was to fix) necessary for the maintenance of domestic order. French armed forces at the time of the armistice still in territory to be occupied by Germany were to be withdrawn to non-occupied territory and discharged. Before marching out, these troops were to lay down their weapons and equipment at the places where they were stationed. Germany obtained the right to demand the surrender, in good condition, of all guns, tanks, planes, means of conveyance, and ammunition of French units still resisting in non-occupied territory at the time the armistice came into force. The Italians for their part were entitled to demand the surrender " in whole or in part " of the collective arms and ammunition of all French units which had been engaged against, or even facing, Italian forces. Such of these war materials (in non-occupied territory) as were not allocated to France were to be stored under German or Italian control. Finally, the manufacture of new war materials in unoccupied territory was to stop immediately.

Economic fetters supplemented these military shackles on French recovery. The economic provisions were brief ; but they were none the less potent for that. The French Government bound itself to prevent

the transfer of economic valuables *and provisions* from occupied to unoccupied territory without German permission ; the German Government merely condescending "in that connexion . . . [to] consider the necessities of life of the population in unoccupied territory." A further economic stipulation of far-reaching effect required "the French Government, in agreement with responsible German officials, [to] carry out the return of the population into unoccupied territory." The meaning of these provisions will appear more clearly below.

All these arrangements having secured to Germany the fullest material exploitation of her victory (and having contemptuously tossed to Italy gains far beyond her own strength to win), the armistice agreements went on to press the maximum of humiliation into the Pétain Government's cup. France had been Britain's ally and comrade-in-arms. But in future the French Government was "to forbid any portion of its remaining armed forces to undertake hostilities against Germany in any manner"; to "prevent members of its armed forces from leaving the country, and prevent armaments of any sort, including ships, planes, etc., being taken to England or any other place abroad"; and to "forbid French citizens to fight against Germany in the service of states with which the German Reich [was] still at war." French citizens whom patriotism inspired to violate this provision and work for the liberation of their country were "to be treated by German troops as insurgents." In the case of Italy, similar provisions extended to the French colonial empire. Moreover, in order to give the maximum military and economic freedom of movement to the Axis Powers in their war against Britain, another clause required France to convey transit freight between the Reich and Italy through *unoccupied* territory.

It was perhaps natural that the armistice should deal severely with air transport and wireless communications. No flights over *any* French territory might be made without German approval, while aerodromes in unoccupied France were placed under German or Italian control. As regards wireless, the resumption of transmission from stations in unoccupied France required special permission, while elsewhere it was forbidden (save on Axis instructions). Natural, too, was the stipulation that the French Government should "bear the costs of maintenance of German occupation troops on French soil"—though the economic burden of an obligation so vaguely defined might well become unbearable. A not unreasonable requirement made the French Government responsible for the security of all the objects which were to be surrendered, and bound

them to make compensation for any damage or removal contrary to the agreement.

On a very different footing, however, were the unilateral and shameful arrangements regarding prisoners, for which it is doubtful whether precedent can be found between civilized nations or in modern times. On the one hand,

“All German war and civil prisoners in French custody, including those under arrest and convicted, who were seized and sentenced because of acts in favour of the Reich, shall be surrendered immediately to the German troops. The French Government is obliged to surrender upon demand all Germans designated by the German Government in France, as well as in the French possessions, colonies, protectorate territories, and mandates.”

The Italian agreement contained a similar provision about Italian prisoners in France or French territories. On the other hand,

“French troops in German prison camps will remain prisoners of war until conclusion of a peace.”

The administrative arrangements added a further dose of humiliation. The armistice agreement with Germany was to be administered by a German Armistice Commission, acting in accordance with the directions of the German High Command. The only right which the French Government received was to send to the seat of the Armistice Commission a delegation which could present French wishes and receive rulings with regard to them. But even this vast mass of material concession and moral abjectness gave the French no security for the future; for while the provisions to which the Pétain Government assented were to be “valid until the conclusion of a peace treaty,” over both the German and the Italian agreements was suspended the whip-lash of a permanent threat. In the words of the German text—and the agreement with Italy contained a similar clause—

“The German Government may terminate this agreement at any time with immediate effect if the French Government fails to fulfil the obligations it assumes under the agreement.”

Such were the terms which the Pétain Government concluded with France’s German and Italian foes. Germany’s and Italy’s gains under the armistice were obvious. The Third Reich had knocked its French

opponent right out of the war. When hostilities ceased, French military and air power, despite manifest weaknesses and the terrible blows it had sustained, was still substantial. The armistice destroyed it utterly and finally until the day dawned when Germany would be driven out of France and a great effort of reconstruction and re-equipment could begin in a reunited nation. Meanwhile, France's division into occupied and unoccupied territory could scarcely fail to work political mischief to her further disadvantage. And for a long time to come the Third Reich had won and would hold on the French Atlantic and Channel coasts some 1,300 miles of seaboard from which to prosecute its naval plans and organize its invasion attempts against Great Britain. As for Italy, though vociferous claims for Corsica, Tunis, Nice, (perhaps also Savoy), were set aside at least for the moment, Italy secured in Europe, in the Mediterranean, and in Africa strategic freedom with which to prosecute its war against the supposedly tottering British Empire.

For France, the consequences of the armistice were disastrous. The wedge of occupied territory along the Atlantic coast was about twenty-five miles wide at the Spanish frontier and about 150 miles wide near Tours on the Loire. Taken as a whole, occupied France, from the Belgian frontier near Dunkirk in the north to the Spanish frontier near St. Jean-Pied-de-Port in the south, was some 600 miles long. Its breadth, from the tip of Brittany near Brest to the Swiss frontier near Basle, was also some 600 miles. Occupied territory comprised all of 42 departments, and part of 11 departments, out of a total of 90 departments. Its approximate area—allowing for estimates in the case of the partly occupied departments—was 114,000 square miles, or 53½ per cent. of the area of France at the outbreak of war in 1939.

In population, productivity, and wealth, occupied France was by far the most important part of the country. In 1936, 27½ million people lived there, and only 14½ millions in unoccupied France. At the armistice, allowing for some 6 million refugees (most of whom had fled to unoccupied territory) and for some 2 million French prisoners of war in German hands (of whom perhaps half came originally from occupied and half from unoccupied territory), the population of occupied and of unoccupied France respectively may have been roughly equal. As an approximation, their numbers were some 20½ to 21 millions in *occupied* France, and some 19½ to 20 millions in *unoccupied* France.

The division of foodstuffs was very different. Occupied France produced in 1937 86 per cent. of the total wheat crop, 79 per cent. of the

oat crop, 60 per cent. of the potatoes, and at least 84 per cent. of the beet-sugar output. Its livestock included 75 per cent. of France's horses, 64 per cent. of her cattle, and 55 per cent. of her pigs. Among major agricultural resources, occupied France secured less than half the total only in sheep (39 per cent.) and in wine (22 per cent.).

Industrially the position was far worse. The occupied departments produced 81 per cent. of France's coal and practically all her vast output of iron ore (the exact figure in 1936 was 99·87 per cent.). Its blast furnaces smelted 97 per cent. of her pig iron ; its steel furnaces made 96 per cent. of all her steel—and what remained to unoccupied France was no more than the trifling capacity of small-scale jobbing works or local foundries. In textiles, 90 per cent. of France's cloth and 80 per cent. of her woollen goods were manufactured north of the Seine—notably in and around the great textile centres of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing. The greater part of France's chemical products were produced in the Seine valley. There, too, almost all her motor-cars and aeroplanes were manufactured. And besides these great industries, occupied France contained the country's main arsenals, ordnance factories, and shipyards, together with over half her railways and about half her production of electricity.

But these statistical measures, though significant, by no means show the whole consequences which the armistice had on France even economically. Pre-war France, like most countries, was an economic whole. The abundant products of its richly dowered soil, its favoured climate, and its varied industries were exchanged between the many producing regions. When the country was brutally split into two parts as by an axe, how was unoccupied France to live if it could not draw on occupied territory ? Or how could the agriculture and industries of occupied France produce when half their normal markets had been violently shorn away ? Yet these were only the *internal* difficulties, which loss of foreign markets and foreign sources of supply further multiplied and complicated ; while overshadowing the whole of France and all her people lowered the monstrous threat—only too soon to be realized—of what would happen when the German war machine began to plunder and to gorge the immense booty it had captured.

#### 9. FROM BORDEAUX TO DE GAULLE

A series of deeply perplexing questions haunts and baffles everyone who contemplates the results of the German and Italian armistice agreements of June, 1940. The Pétain Government at Bordeaux were not

compelled to accept these terms. Until the French signatures were affixed to the texts, those responsible for the life, the honour, and the welfare of France were free to withhold their assent and to throw on the conquerors the entire burden and discredit of administering somehow the people and the territories they had vanquished. How was it, then, that the men of Bordeaux did not make this choice? How could they undertake the immense responsibility of attempting to govern an unoccupied France which faced such vast and insoluble problems? How could they commit themselves to a future that—as the facts and figures given above plainly show—could not possibly be retrieved by regrowth of the military power which alone could block the Third Reich's lust for conquest? How could they accept a policy that, by dividing France, was bound, throughout the length and breadth of the country, to create confusion instead of fostering understanding, to separate Frenchmen instead of uniting them, and thus to weaken yet further, in the face of a cruel and insatiable foe, a people whose only hope lay in comprehension, union, and strength? How, indeed, could they even consent to leave millions of their own countrymen as prisoners for an indefinite period in the hands of an enemy notorious for his harshness? How could men who had just quit the side of an Ally to whom they were bound by solemn and formal oaths as well as by blood shed in a common cause against a common foe (not to mention the scarcely lighter ties of past memories, present interests and perils, and future hopes) agree to the use of their own territory against their former Ally and even recall their ships-of-war to ports where these might be employed for the same fell purpose? And how could men who did such deeds then turn to the world and call their acts "honourable"?

The answer to these questions—so far as there can be an answer—lies largely in the confusion of political standards and the corruption of political life which characterized contemporary France. These subjects are further examined below. Here we need only note three points. First, that by all accounts the old Marshal, whose name the Pétain Government bore, apparently assented to the policy which others framed and put up to him in thorough good faith, and in the genuine belief that he was acting honourably in the interests of his country. In the opinion of most informed observers, extreme age, and the weakening of intellectual powers which extreme age often brings, were responsible for what in his case was misunderstanding and misjudgment. Secondly, the French people as a whole certainly had no part or lot in taking the decisions whose bitter consequences they were to bear. On the contrary, the

knowledge necessary for judgment was wilfully withheld from them until it was too late. Thus, the full armistice terms were not published in France at the time ; nor was it known even as late as April, 1941, that they had ever been subsequently published by the French authorities. And that this policy of keeping the French public in ignorance was deliberate is proved (to mention no other evidence) by the quotation from the *Petite Gironde* reproduced above.

The third point is that, during the critical period of negotiations as well as after the armistice, the men of Bordeaux themselves gave many tell-tale signs of unease, apprehension, and guilt. This was a time, of course, when censorship and concealment swiftly cut France off from the outside world as with a thick fog rising from the sea. Even so, sufficient evidence trickled through. M. Georges Mandel, for example, Minister of the Interior in M. Reynaud's Cabinet and the faithful, untiring collaborator of the great Clemenceau, was perhaps the staunchest, most resolute, and most able of those who were resolved in no circumstances to surrender. On June 17th M. Mandel was arrested while lunching at a well-known restaurant in Bordeaux. He was not released until, some hours later, M. Herriot (the President of the French Chamber of Deputies) and M. Jeanneney (the President of the French Senate) made urgent representations jointly and in person to Marshal Pétain, and the old Marshal, realizing that he had been made the unwitting tool of a plot against an innocent and patriotic man, had written out with his own hand a letter of exoneration and apology which M. Mandel personally dictated. Again, on June 19th, the director of the French wireless, in what was practically an official broadcast, stated that while the Pétain Government was ready to end the struggle, it would "not accept anything that interferes with the structure of our country. We are capitulating with honour, but if it is sought to impose upon France conditions incompatible with that honour, she will continue the struggle with her Allies." These would have been brave words—if they had not really meant the precise opposite of what they appeared to say. That they should have been broadcast at all (by an official, incidentally, whom higher authorities could always repudiate) shows how deeply the men of Bordeaux feared French public opinion, and how determined they were to deceive it.

A trick similar to the arrest of M. Mandel was played on a number of other deputies who favoured continued resistance. They included M. Daladier (M. Reynaud's predecessor as Premier) and three members

of the Reynaud Cabinet who consistently opposed capitulation—MM. Mandel, Delbos, and Campinchi. On June 19th, when rumours were widespread that the Pétain Government had reverted to the idea of continuing the struggle from French North Africa, these men boarded the steamship *Massiglia* in the Gironde estuary near Bordeaux. The next day she sailed for Casablanca. On July 10th M. Laval himself admitted at Vichy that the French authorities had facilitated her departure. Having thus got rid of redoubtable opponents during the critical period of negotiations when they might have been troublesome, the men of Bordeaux subsequently censured them severely and actually charged with desertion those on the *Massiglia* who were army officers as well as deputies.

Among the outward signs which showed how hard guilty consciences were straining to achieve self-justification was a remarkable official statement broadcast on June 24th by M. Prouvost, the Commissioner for Propaganda. This statement was an attempt by the Bordeaux Government to throw on Britain much of the blame for France's defeat. Among other allegations, it asserted that "twenty-six British divisions were to leave for France in the first months of hostilities"; and that, during a visit to England in March, 1940, a large delegation of the French press "considered that the British war effort would prove to be insufficient."

An official reply issued in London the following day (June 25th) said that M. Prouvost's "statement is inaccurate throughout and misrepresents the [British] attitude." Contemporary British critics would by no means dissent from the French press delegation's criticism of the sufficiency of Britain's war effort. Although details were necessarily closely guarded, a great body of patriotic, intelligent, and far-seeing British men and women felt the gravest doubts as to whether Britain's armament programme had been planned on a big enough scale or was being driven ahead with the ruthless, barrier-destroying energy which the nation's peril demanded. Such criticism, however, ill became any members of the French press delegation except those—later events were to show how few they were—who themselves could give the right answer to the questions, "why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" And a contemporary clue to the volume and pace of armament production in Britain and France respectively may be found in the fact that the then Government of the French Republic—the principal members of which did

not include those men of Bordeaux who found themselves so wise after the event, and which was certainly more fully informed about British preparations than any press delegation could or should have been—actually chose the month of March, 1940, to conclude the “solemn declaration” already quoted which bound the two countries not to make a separate peace. As regards the alleged British promise to send “twenty-six British divisions” to France “in the first months of hostilities,” Mr. Churchill told the House of Commons that the twelve British divisions actually sent—totalling, with non-divisional and auxiliary troops, some 400,000 men—were “fully up to the number which the French had been led to expect would be available in France at the ninth month of the war.” Mr. Churchill’s statement was made on June 18th—*before* the Bordeaux Government had finally decided on surrender. M. Prouvost did not venture to make his allegations until six days later—*after* the Bordeaux Government had actually accepted the appalling terms of the armistice.

The men of Bordeaux did not succeed, however, in shaking the attitude of most British people, or of the British Government, towards France. Throughout these dark and bitter days Mr. Churchill expressed that attitude consistently, generously, without reproach. On June 17th, the day after the Pétain Government was formed, he broadcast a short message which said :

“The news from France is very bad, and I grieve for the gallant French people who have fallen into this terrible misfortune. Nothing will alter our feelings towards them, or our faith that the genius of France will rise again. . . . We are sure that in the end all will be well.”

In the House of Commons on the following day Mr. Churchill, while pointing out that the Bordeaux Government would be throwing away great opportunities and endangering their future if they did not continue the war, repeated and underlined, as regards France and the French people, the sense of this message :

“However matters may go in France [he said], or with the French Government, or with another French Government, we in this island and in the British Empire will never lose our sense of comradeship with the French people. If we are now called upon to endure what they have suffered, we shall emulate their courage; and, if final victory rewards our toils, they shall share the gains.”

Even when the German terms became known, Mr. Churchill did not change by a syllable his views about the French people and France. In a statement issued on June 23rd (the day after the armistice with Germany was signed at Compiègne), Mr. Churchill, in his capacity as Prime Minister, said :

“ His Majesty’s Government have heard with grief and amazement that the terms dictated by the Germans have been accepted by the French Government at Bordeaux. They cannot feel that such, or similar, terms could have been submitted to by any French Government which professed freedom, independence, and constitutional authority.”

After pointing out the meaning of these terms to France, the French Empire, and Great Britain, the Prime Minister reaffirmed the British Government’s firm belief that they would be able to carry the war to a successful conclusion and their pledge that France should share in the fruits of victory.

“ When Great Britain is victorious [the statement concluded] she will, in spite of the action of the Bordeaux Government, cherish the cause of the French people. . . . Accordingly, His Majesty’s Government . . . appeal to all Frenchmen, wherever they may be, to aid to the utmost of their strength the forces of liberation, which are enormous, and which, faithfully and resolutely used, will assuredly prevail.”

And the opening words of Mr. Churchill’s speech in the House of Commons on June 25th—his last public pronouncement about developments in France during this critical period—breathed the same spirit and the same resolve :

“ The House will feel profound sorrow [the Prime Minister said] at the fate of the great French nation and people to whom we have been joined so long in war and peace, and whom we have regarded as trustees with ourselves for the progress of a liberal culture and tolerant civilization in Europe. There is no use or advantage in wasting strength and time upon hard words and reproaches. We hope that life and power will be given us to rescue France from the ruin and bondage into which she has been cast.”

The assurance of British understanding, the solid promise of substantial British aid, which Mr. Churchill’s consistently warm and heartening words contained, flung open again the gates of hope for the stricken

French people. But hope thrives only when feeling finds an outlet in directed action. For France in these tragic hours of impotence, bewilderment, and suffering, the prime question was not whether patriotism was dead among her children. The forthright outspokenness and courage of many of her brave leaders, even amid the confusion, weakness, and betrayal which prevailed at Bordeaux, proved the contrary. The question, which for a time was as uncertain as it was vital, was whether among her sons some with the requisite qualities of character, leadership, and standing would step forward in circumstances which offered them freedom to act.

The answer, fortunately, was in the affirmative. We have seen that, among the changes made by M. Reynaud in the Cabinet reshuffle which took place on June 6th—the second day of the Battle of France—was the appointment of General Charles de Gaulle as Under-Secretary of Defence. The liaison work with Great Britain included among his duties in this post happily made General de Gaulle well known to Mr. Churchill and other members of the British Government. During the anxious days prior to France's collapse, General de Gaulle threw the whole of his not inconsiderable influence with M. Reynaud on the side of fortitude, resistance, and honour. When other personalities and very different considerations seemed almost certain to triumph, General de Gaulle flew at once to England; resumed his contacts with the British Government; persuaded them (doubtless without great difficulty) that the establishment of a Free French movement was essential in the interests alike of France and of victory; and forthwith set to work, if possible to stave off capitulation, and then (when the Bordeaux Government had finally yielded), to convert his own people to a policy of constructive opposition by Frenchmen everywhere according to their circumstances and their powers.

The man who took this resolute and self-sacrificing stand was forty-nine years old. A soldier by profession, General de Gaulle had proved his personal courage during the Great War of 1914–18, in which he had fought bravely and sustained several wounds. After a brilliant early career in the French Army, his imagination, tenacity, and moral courage had cost him the swift professional preferment to posts of real responsibility which his high qualities deserved. In 1934 he crystallized his views on mechanization and the French Army in a book (later translated into English under the title of *The Army of the Future*), the insight and analytical power of which testified to his profound understanding alike of

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the principles that underlie war in all its forms and of the true requirements of France's defence in a modern, mechanical age. In the fetid atmosphere of French political and military thought at the time, his ideas found sympathy with M. Reynaud alone among leading French politicians. In military circles General de Gaulle was a prophet without honour only in his own country. Nazi Germany, even then preparing her vast programme of conquest, seized on his proposals with avidity and—as the sequel was to show on the soil of France itself—made them terribly her own. The French High Command showed no such insight. Instead, they visited their wrath upon the author of such notions—to them patently monstrous—by keeping him in the decent obscurity which bureaucratic routineers reserve for the able men who challenge their competence. Only the accession of M. Reynaud to power rescued General de Gaulle at long last. It was then too late.

Adversity, however, is an anvil on which character is forged ; and when the day of trial came, General de Gaulle proved that his steel had been truly tempered. His first broadcast to the French people was made on June 18th, before capitulation was certain or final. It showed the quality of his spirit. He neither fudged nor blinked the facts, brutal as they were, but based his appeal on the unshakable foundations of intelligence, effort, and faith.

“ We certainly have been [he said], and still are, submerged by the mechanical strength of the enemy, both on land and in the air. . . . But has the last word been said ? Has all hope disappeared ? Is the defeat final ? No. Believe me, I speak with knowledge, and I tell you that France is not lost. The same methods that have brought about our defeat can quite well one day bring victory. For France is not alone. . . . She has a vast empire behind her. She can unite with the British Empire, which holds the seas and is continuing the struggle. She can utilize to the full the vast industrial resources of the United States. . . . This war is a World War. In spite of all our mistakes, all our deficiencies, all our sufferings, there are in the universe sufficient means to enable us one day to crush our enemies. Shattered to-day by mechanical force, we shall be able to conquer in the future by stronger mechanical force. The fate of the world depends upon it. . . . Whatever happens, the flame of French resistance must not and shall not be extinguished.”

At the end of June, 1940, there were many Frenchmen and French-women in England, the French Empire, and France itself who heard and



GENERAL DE GAULLE



rallied to this appeal. Among those outside France, General de Gaulle formed a group which served as the nucleus of the Free French movement. The task to which these men set their hand was to occupy them for many long months. The military efforts and strategic results of the Free French movement were to appear at many times and in many places throughout the subsequent history of the war. With the details of these developments we are not for the moment concerned. Here we need only note that General de Gaulle's words reached an audience even wider than the compatriots whom he primarily addressed. Throughout the civilized world France held countless hearts in fee. The manifold beauties of her soil, the qualities of her strong and sensitive people, the artistry she added to the material enjoyments of life, the graces and gallantry of her manners, the glories of her architecture and her art, the rich variety of her literature, the clarity and suppleness of her thought, above all the depth, the proportion, and the humanity of her spirit, not merely made France and the French a country and a nation, but also radiated the influence of her achievement and inspiration throughout the entire concourse of civilized mankind. That all this should perish amid the corrupt casuistry, the craven weakness, and the abject shams of Bordeaux was intolerable. The world that prized France knew that beneath the mists and shadows of defeat another France—the real France—must still remain. And when the strong, clear voice of General de Gaulle spoke with the accents of that other France, the world knew that the real France was not only not dead but was imperishable.

#### 10. CAUSES OF DEFEAT

From a military and strategic standpoint, the Battle of Flanders down to Dunkirk (which was recounted in the previous volume) and the Battle of France form a single whole. Hitler himself reviewed the campaign in a speech before the Reichstag on July 19th, 1940. His speech, besides dealing with many other matters, also summarized the strategy of the German attack. Since military operations of this character are too vast and too complex to be extemporized, and since the course of events broadly corresponded with what Hitler alleged to be the German plan, the Nazi leader's account may perhaps on this occasion be accepted as in substance correct.

According to Hitler, then, the German scheme was to organize the entire military strength of the Reich by land and air for an attack which, if successful, would annihilate completely the whole of the British and

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French forces. The campaign was to proceed in four major stages. The first stage was to break through France's northern defences and destroy the Anglo-French armies defending them. In the second stage, the Germans were to seize the Seine at Le Havre and to secure on the Somme and the Aisne a basis of operations for the third stage. During this third stage, German forces, starting from the Somme-Aisne position, were to push right through to the Swiss frontier. The final stage was to be a south-westerly drive to the French Atlantic coast south of Bordeaux.

In this great plan—which even defeated opponents must admit to have been well conceived—the break-through was the critical pivot on which all else turned. In contrast to 1914, the break-through (Hitler states) was organized this time so that its centre of gravity should appear (with the object of deceiving the enemy) to be on the German right, whereas it was in fact on the German left. Hitler adds that the concentration of Allied motorized forces south of the Belgian frontier assisted the German plan, since in the German view these dispositions made it seem certain that the Allies intended to advance into Belgium, a proceeding which would (and did) expose a vulnerable Allied right flank to German attack.

Hitler ascribes the success of what he calls "this most colossal battle in world history" almost entirely to German merit. In this Reichstag speech the only word he spares for any non-German action which contributed to the German victory is a brief but warranted reference to the grave strategical error which the Allies committed when they advanced into Belgium. Otherwise, the triumph of German arms was due (according to him) "to the German soldiers themselves," to the soldiers' courage and training, to "the example of innumerable officers and non-commissioned officers," to the leadership of the new Army of National-Socialist Germany, to "the entire German race" which "played its part." The non-German world did not disparage what was justified in these claims. It noted them as a whole, however, against the day when the argument would be reversed against a Germany in defeat.

The official French view of the Battle of the West was of course quite different. It was presented to the French people in a broadcast on June 20th, 1940, in which Marshal Pétain sought to explain why "from June 13th the [French] request for an armistice was inevitable." The aged Marshal proceeded by the way of comparison between the War of 1939-40 and the Great War of 1914-18.

"On May 1st, 1917 [he said], we still had 3,280,000 men under arms, in spite of three years of murderous fighting. On the eve of the present battle we had 500,000 fewer. In May, 1918, we had 85 British divisions. In May, 1940, we only had 10. In 1918 we had with us 58 Italian divisions and 42 American divisions. The inferiority of our *materiel* was even greater than that of our effectives. French aviation has fought at odds of one to six. Not so strong as twenty-two years ago, we had also fewer friends, too few children, too few arms, too few allies. There is the cause of our defeat."

Herr Hitler's account is over-simplified (to say the least) as an explanation of the German victory. Marshal Pétain's statement testifies to the courage of an honest mind, but is essentially a catalogue of facts bearing on France's defeat rather than an analysis of causes. The vital questions remain. *Why* was Germany victorious, and *why*, above all, did France collapse? A comprehensive answer is still impossible. Much of the relevant material has perished for ever; much more is not yet available. But enough is known, and, under the compelling pressure of anguish and peril, what is known has been sufficiently examined, to enable at least a provisional reply to be framed.

First of all, it is clear that no single, simple cause explains what happened. At one stage during the life of the Third Reich men repeated fearfully the legend (which Nazi propaganda sedulously spread) that the German war machine was "irresistible." Nothing could be farther from the truth. The effectiveness of resistance depends on the relative strength of *all* the forces involved, those resisting as well as those attacking; and the real question is therefore not whether this legend is true, but why in 1940 the Germans were too strong for the French.

Here, too, it is clear that there is no single, simple answer. The multiplicity and interconnection of causes corresponds with the vastness and complexity of effects. Nor can what seems like pure chance be left out of account. Take, for example, three singularly unfortunate mishaps. Some years before the war, King Leopold II of Belgium lost his wife in consequence of a motor accident. Again, on January 7th, 1940, M. Daladier, while week-ending with a friend an hour from Paris, went riding alone in the forest. Frost had hardened the ground, his horse slipped, and the then French Premier was thrown from the saddle with his foot caught in a stirrup. Yet again, the French General Billotte was killed on the night of May 22nd, 1940, when his car crashed into another vehicle on the road.

Who can say what consequences flowed from these accidents? Plainly their effects could not be so serious as, say, the death of Napoleon on the bridge at Lodi, or of Mussolini in 1922 during the Fascist March on Rome, or of Hitler in the abortive Munich *Putsch* of November 9th, 1923. But the results were bad enough for all that. All accounts agree that King Leopold held his own driving responsible for his wife's death, and that his bereavement seriously affected his outlook on life and exposed him to baleful pro-German influences which might otherwise never have won a secure foothold. In their absence, the whole Allied strategy of defence in the west might have been favourably affected; suitable measures to retard a German attack concerted in advance; and the tragedy of the Belgian capitulation avoided. As for M. Daladier, during this unfortunate week-end he was planning a Cabinet reconstruction which the pain and fatigue due to his mishap contributed to prevent him from carrying through. Here, too, the consequences were far-reaching. They included the Reynaud Cabinet and the singular political misjudgment that led M. Reynaud gradually to surround himself by the defeatist ministers whose number and influence prevailed at Bordeaux. And General Billotte's death was untimely, if not worse. The Commander of the First French Army and the "co-ordinator" of the fifty French, British, and Belgian divisions in the north, he met death while returning from a conference at Ypres with Lord Gort and King Leopold. That conference was considering General Weygand's plans to close the gap which the Germans had made between the Allied armies of the North and the main French forces south of the Somme. The gap was never closed. It might not have been closed had General Billotte lived. But his death cannot have been wholly without influence on the Allied failure to close it—nor, therefore, on the subsequent evacuation at Dunkirk and the complete destruction in Flanders of the best-equipped divisions France put in the field.

But if what looks like chance cannot be disregarded, its rôle was certainly secondary. By contrast, the influence of other factors was major and unmistakable. These factors were military and strategic; diplomatic, political, and moral. Their roots stretched far back into the past. Many of them operated in Britain as well as in France—and, indeed, throughout most of the civilized world. Some—and those not the least important—worked mainly in France herself. So far as knowledge and space permit, we shall try here to disentangle a few of them.

Among military factors one is outstanding—the immense contrast

in numbers, equipment, weapons, and training between the German forces on the one hand and the Allied (and especially the French) forces on the other hand. At the time of writing the number of German divisions was not definitely known; but the *minimum* estimate by reliable authorities places their total in the west alone at 100 divisions during May and June, 1940—and 125 to 150 may well be nearer the mark. This is apart from the large forces which the Germans retained in Eastern Europe and at home. Against this the French mustered about 75 or 80 divisions—22 caught in the north, another 45 referred to by the French military spokesman during the Battle of France, and the rest (pending official figures) thrown in for good measure to account for Maginot Line units and other troops. The context of Marshal Pétain's broadcast of June 20th, 1940, suggests that by "the eve of the present battle" he meant the beginning of the campaign on May 10th, and not the opening of the Battle of France on June 5th. According to this unimpeachable authority, France then had some 2,750,000 men under arms; a figure which, allowing for non-divisional and non-combatant units, broadly agrees with a total of 75 to 80 divisions. British divisions sent to France totalled 12 (not 10, as Marshal Pétain said), a number which (because of reliance on the Maginot Line and on ultimate victory by attrition) did not fall below what the French General Staff wanted during the first stage of the war. Since the Belgian and Dutch armies could scarcely be counted in this calculation—and, in view of diplomatic uncertainties and weakness of equipment ought certainly not to have been so counted—the Germans then outnumbered the *main* Allied forces when the attack started by between 1½ and 2 to 1.

As regards *materiel*, the position was far worse. The scanty information available in April, 1941, comes mainly from an article by M. André Géraud—better known as "Pertinax"—for years the authoritative political commentator of the *Echo de Paris*—published in the January, 1941, issue of the American quarterly *Foreign Affairs*. "In the month of September, 1939, the French Army had approximately the arms and ammunition necessary to fight a war of the 1914–18 type. In everything else it was sadly deficient." Thus M. Géraud. He adds that what was available in September, 1939, was largely used up by May, 1940, "even under the slow rhythm of operations which prevailed."

France was best off in artillery. There were old guns in abundance—more than 4,000 of the superb 75's (3-inch guns), including the new model with a range of seven miles, and more than 3,000 heavy guns. The

105-millimetre (4·1-inch) gun, which was to replace the 75's, was in production. Two French artillery pieces were apparently unequalled in other countries—the 47-millimetre (1·85-inch) anti-tank gun, and the 90-millimetre (3·5-inch) anti-tank and anti-aircraft gun. The latter could penetrate 3½-inch armour at 2,000 yards range. But except for the 75's, there was a serious lack of shells—notably for the 105's, the 155's (6·1-inch guns), and the 25-millimetre (1-inch) anti-aircraft guns, for which the type of fuse was never settled. By the end of May only 5,000 shells for the 90's had been delivered—which was why, during the Battle of France, the French had to fall back on out-of-date or unsuitable anti-tank guns. In April, 1940, the French General Staff were still hawering over quantities—should monthly needs be fixed at 3, 4, or 5 million shells?—and over types—should they decide on a dearer but more effective steel shell, or on a cheaper iron-and-steel shell which could be made in greater quantities? There were no gas bombs at all. As for land mines, in a search for perfection, not even the preliminary studies were all completed.

In tanks and planes the position was worse. France entered the war with about 1,700 tanks. By May 10th, 1940, she had some 3,600. During this period, M. Géraud states, the number of German tanks increased from 6,000 to *at least* 11,000. The French tanks were mainly twenty-ton and thirty-ton machines, though there were a few seventy-tonners. But servicing lorries were short, and whereas three per tank in the field—or some 10,000—were required, at most 900 were available. Even the tanks in existence were not all used. As we saw on page 63 above, the Germans on June 21st announced the capture at Nevoy of 700 new ones.

At the outbreak of war France had some 1,300 to 1,400 planes. Practically none were bombers. By May, 1940, reserves had been built up behind these from the French monthly output of about 350 machines (a fifth of them bombers) and the monthly American contribution of seventy or eighty. Some experts held that even these figures—which come from M. Guy la Chambre, Air Minister in M. Daladier's Cabinet—were too high. As regards the Germans, the Luftwaffe cannot have had a total strength much below 20,000 to 25,000 by May, 1940, of which a very large proportion indeed were bombers.

One last detail sums up all remaining shortcomings in French equipment. Neither for the Norwegian nor the Belgian campaigns were there enough proper maps.

There is not space to review the criticisms made subsequently of French military training, or of the Allied reply to German tactics of modern mechanical warfare and combined land and air operations. It is perhaps sufficient here to record one reported objection to the suggestion that French soldiers should be trained in advance about the ways of flame-throwing tanks. Such training would never do (it was said), because it would spoil the crops! Nor is it possible to try to sort out here the several contributions to German tactical successes made respectively by dive-bombing, by armoured divisions, and by air support to land operations, as distinct from the German superiority in numbers, fire-power, and military strength generally. That even initial Allied unfamiliarity with the nerve-racking methods of the dive-bomber and the tank was not necessarily fatal is proved by the tenacity and effectiveness of both British and French actions in many places. To mention here only a single example—a French one as it happens. At Rethel the Germans never achieved a break-through; and in this sector French withdrawals were always made in an orderly fashion, and then only in response to orders. But the French at Rethel were well led—which unfortunately was not always the case. And even where well-led French troops did not manage to hold the Germans back, shortage and relative unsuitability of the weapons available, inadequate training, local weakness in the air, the natural and man-made strength of the positions concerned, and the respective local ratio of forces, are among the factors that must all be brought into the reckoning before German tactics as such can be assigned their real due.

On two tactical points, however, the conclusions reached during the Battles of Flanders and of France required little subsequent revision. The German technique of deliberately choking the roads with a torrent of refugees (which has been fully described on p. 46 above) plainly had disastrous consequences for the surface-bound mechanized forces of the Allies. And the entire campaign in the west drove home once and for all the lesson that, apart altogether from tactical co-operation with ground forces, successful land operations in modern warfare are impossible for those who once lose the mastery of the air.

Allied weakness in numbers, weapons, and equipment, together with the novel scale on which Germany exploited the tactical methods of the Blitzkrieg, greatly increased the fatefulness of the major strategic decisions and assumptions of the Allies. Three were of outstanding importance—the surrender of Paris, the advance into Belgium, and the

complex hypotheses and hopes of which the Maginot Line was the symbol. All are highly controversial. Events proved all of them wrong.

The surrender of Paris was the least weighty of the three. That the decision to yield the city without fighting was not a fatal mistake is certainly an arguable proposition. Great German forces east and west of the capital were doubtless in a position to sweep past Paris before it fell. German conduct at Warsaw and Rotterdam demonstrated in advance how costly and destructive the defence would have been. But Paris, besides being the capital of France, was one of the country's principal arsenals. For millions of Frenchmen and Frenchwomen (to say nothing of foreigners) it was the holy of holies of French life. The defence of Paris, even for a time, would have provided a breathing spell in which to dismantle and destroy vital machinery which ought never to have fallen into the hands of the enemy. It would have shown the nation and the world (including the Germans) that nothing—not even Paris—was dearer to France than the freedom for which she was fighting. As things turned out, the fall of Paris without a blow produced well-nigh universal consternation and bewilderment throughout the whole country. It demoralized great bodies of French troops and helped to turn their retreat into a rout. And it weakened immeasurably that will to fight which is the most vital and most productive of all the imponderabilia of war.

Emotionally less highly charged but in practice quite fatal, was the Allied advance into the Low Countries. Even nine or ten months afterwards it was impossible to comprehend the reasons for this move, which entailed perils so immense that only complete success could have justified it. As Hitler's Reichstag speech quoted above shows, the Germans gloated over the ease with which their foes fell into a perfect trap. Why, then, was this fatal step ever taken?

This question cannot yet be answered. General Gamelin, the French Commander-in-Chief, who bore ultimate responsibility for the *military* arguments which civilian Cabinets in Britain and France accepted, has not published his reasons. It is doubly hard to frame a case for the defence without his testimony; nor is it fair to condemn any man unheard. But even in the absence of the chief witness, certain facts are outstanding.

The strategic desirability of keeping the Germans out of the Low Countries, and therefore away from the Channel ports and the long,

weakly defended northern frontier of France, is obvious. The difficulty of doing this arose partly from the weaknesses on the Allied side which we have just reviewed, and partly from the Dutch and Belgian policy of strict—and unwarrantably optimistic—neutrality. This policy prevented Britain and France from concerting defensive measures beforehand with the Belgian and Dutch Governments. In war, however, the desirable must always be subordinated to the possible. Britain and France had spent an entire winter in strengthening the northern extension of the Maginot Line from Montmédy to the sea. Along that line they had placed their best and most powerful divisions. Once that line was left, they could not advance to prepared positions in the Low Countries ; and they could only regain their own strong points if the enemy allowed them to do so. Hence to stay put was comparatively safe ; to move was highly dangerous. Yet the Allies *did* move—with fatal results. Why ?

The answer must surely be compounded out of one or more of three elements. The Allied intelligence service—certainly defective in other fields—must once again have grossly failed to produce the real facts about Germany's strength, to say nothing about her plans. Or if it did produce the facts, these (together with the relevant material about Allied strength and Dutch and Belgian defences) must have been misinterpreted. Or else General Gamelin and the Staffs concerned (no doubt British as well as French) had other and quite different plans which seemed sound at the time, but which the outcome proved to be mistaken.

The worst strategical error of all, however, was reliance on the Maginot Line, and the strange psychological compost of assumption, illusion, complacency, and inertia to which the Maginot policy led. In origin and basic conception, the idea of the Maginot Line was quite sensible. Given the fact that France was facing Germany alone in the west, strong frontier defences were clearly desirable. As planned, the Maginot Line was not intended to withstand any conceivable form of attack. It was meant to safeguard French mobilization—necessarily a rather lengthy process—against sudden onslaught ; to enable the French field army to manoeuvre without constant overriding anxiety for the safety of the frontier ; and to buttress counter-attacks by French mobile forces in the rear against any enemy columns that might manage to breach the Line at particular places.

So far, so good. But the best idea is useless unless properly executed ; and at this point the French failed. The Maginot Line was exceedingly costly ; budgetary troubles beset French finances throughout practically

the whole period between 1919 and 1939 ; and the Maginot Line provided one place where economy was possible. Not that the works actually put in hand were skimped. The contrary is the case. All witnesses agree that the fortifications of the Maginot Line proper were magnificent. But the Line proper ran only from the Swiss frontier to Montmédy, just west of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg ; and from Montmédy to the sea—a distance of some 200 miles—the defences were negligible. It is true that British and French troops spent the cold, hard winter of 1939 in strengthening them ; but this was too late for works of the strongest character, particularly in view of the engineering problems that a watery subsoil presented. Nor were the defences of the critical Ardennes sector ever properly reinforced. The French High Command was repeatedly warned not to rely on the natural difficulties of the terrain in the Belgian Ardennes as sufficient safeguard against German attack. The warning was neglected. A German attempt to break through in this sector was forecast. The threat was disregarded. Some of the weakest and worst-led forces in the French Army were thought good enough for the Ardennes front. The consequences are a matter of history.

All these facts make it even harder to understand the Allied advance into the Low Countries, which threw overboard the entire strategy of which the Maginot Line was a vital part. That strategy was essentially defensive. It assumed that the fire-power of modern weapons made defence tactically superior to offence except where the attacking forces enjoyed an advantage of strength so overwhelming as in practice to be unattainable. It therefore inferred that a frontal German onslaught against the Maginot Line was bound to fail. And it concluded that a war of attrition must follow, in which time would work for the Allies and Germany would be defeated inevitably once the blockade and well-known shortages in her raw-material supply had sufficiently drained her strength.

Wisdom after the event is properly a source, not of pride, but of self-reproach. Not all sceptics and critics of this argumentation were, however, merely wise afterwards. The more discerning among them pointed out beforehand the weaknesses in its premises and the fallacies in its reasoning. The assumed superiority of the defence over the offence generalized illegitimately from the experience of trench warfare during the Great War of 1914–18, which a modern aggressor would obviously take great care to prevent from recurring to his disadvantage. The entire technical development of science and engineering after 1918 put new

weapons into the aggressor's hands. The aeroplane enabled an attacker for the first time in history simply to disregard interposed armies and to strike directly at civilian morale and the civil springs of military power. The tank restored armour to effective use by ground forces for the first time since the Hundred Years' War. High explosives and modern mining methods threatened every type of fixed, rigid defences. Such defences, never invulnerable, could therefore no longer be regarded as even secure. They not only did not diminish, but on the whole increased, the freedom of manœuvre of the enemy beyond them, who could study them at leisure and fit them appropriately into his scheme of frontal or turning attack. At the same time, they circumscribed the freedom of the defence, which could not itself go through such barriers, but had to go round them.

The psychological consequences of the Maginot Line were even worse than the material commitments. Courage is the king of war, but surprise is its queen. The Maginot Line put surprise at a discount among the French, and at a premium among the Germans. The mere existence of the Line fostered complacency and removed from wide circles that sense of danger and of urgency which is a spur to effective action. The French General Staff refused to learn the military lessons of the Spanish War or the Polish campaign. As in the case of fuses and land mines, vital decisions were intolerably delayed. Production was allowed to loiter and dawdle. Not even the unexpected respite of the first eight months of so-called "phoney" war was properly used. Instead, it became the means by which Hitler carried out his threat to disintegrate French morale. Worst of all, the Maginot Line destroyed the offensive spirit without which wars are never won. Apparently sheltered beneath the imposing but specious security of its great fortifications, the French military authorities, the French political world, and the French people gradually forgot that positive military effort would be essential against even an economically weakened Germany if the Third Reich was to be laid in the dust.

If the Maginot Line thus paradoxically contributed not to France's defence but to her downfall, the spirit which created it was responsible for errors no less fatal in her foreign policy. No full understanding of the French collapse is possible without close and detailed study of that policy between 1918 and 1939. Such a study cannot be made here. But even a cursory survey must bring major faults to light.

France was a victor in the Great War of 1914-18, thanks partly to the

prowess of her own sons, but even more to the fortunate conjuncture of events which gave her the Anglo-Saxon world, Russia, Italy, Japan, and various second-rank Powers as allies. France, it is true, paid the heaviest contribution in man power towards the cost of Allied victory. But French strength alone was plainly insufficient after 1918 to defeat a resurgent and hostile Germany. France practically acknowledged this fact by the importance she attached to the joint Anglo-American Treaty of Guarantee which, during the peace negotiations in Paris in 1919, was substituted, on British and American insistence, for the Rhine frontier France really desired. Unfortunately for France, when the United States Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, the Treaty of Guarantee automatically lapsed ; and many Frenchmen attribute primarily to this cause the manifold troubles their country suffered afterwards. A deeper and more searching analysis will by no means wholly confirm such a reading of events. After 1918 French policy had a choice of two, and only two, major objectives : to conciliate Germany—if conciliation was possible—and aid her conversion into a good neighbour ; or else to crush German resurgence in the egg or (if that could not be done) at the very least to ensure that in any future struggle France should once again be surrounded by potent, strong, and determined friends, made resolute in the same cause by common interest and shared conviction.

It may be that a policy which aimed at these objectives could not have succeeded. The real point, however, is that it was never consistently tried. Movements towards genuine conciliation recurred spasmodically. Locarno in 1925, the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928 (which attempted to "outlaw" war), were their high-points. France also sought friends. The Anglo-French *entente cordiale* apart, the last determined effort of this kind was made by M. Barthou during a trip in Eastern Europe in 1934. But these examples are like the clear and wholesome tributaries of a mighty river, whose turbid stream is swollen mainly by very different waters ; and their true significance lies in the contrast they provide with the real trend.

That trend was indeed amazing. On the whole, France was exigent and harsh towards Germany when Germany was weak, and inclined towards subservience when Germany was strong. She exasperated and estranged the Anglo-Saxon powers until the rising Nazi menace drew Britain and France together again. In the early years after 1918 she tended to give the rather crude nationalism of the East European Succession States its head, only to withdraw into herself when they

needed support in the later years of growing German strength. She consistently refused to grasp the nettle of her relations with her northern neighbours during the period of increasing peril before 1939. Towards Russia she blew hot and cold alternately. Only Italy and Spain enjoyed almost throughout her sentimental but dangerous indulgence.

Along the bedevilled course which such confused, inconsistent, and contradictory tendencies set, the French ship of state could scarcely avoid strange harbours. In 1923, for example, France, after alienating Britain, found herself alone in the Ruhr in the vain attempt to dig reparations out of an obstinate and recalcitrant people by means of bayonets. Economically, the effort failed as it was bound to do. Politically, it taught Germany a lesson in humiliation, the moral of which German nationalists—and Hitler—sent re-echoing down the years. In 1935 France alienated Britain again, this time by wooing Italy's *beaux yeux* over Abyssinia. Fascist thanks appeared after Munich in the shape of inspired cries for "Nice! Tunis! Corsica!" In 1936 Hitler marched into the Rhineland. The French replied with shrill and angry protests—and inaction. Between 1936 and 1938 France allowed Italy and Germany to create along her southern frontier a nationalist Spain bound by weakness, subservience, and ambition to its totalitarian makers—a proceeding which violated alike the principles and the practice of French policy for over two centuries. In 1938 France actually compelled her Czecho-Slovak ally to accept Hitler's terms at Munich. Here, too, time brought its own revenge; for the German divisions which burst through the French line at Sedan were equipped with tanks made at the great Skoda works in Czecho-Slovakia.

It would ill become any British writer to point the finger of reproach at France because of these acts. British foreign policy during the same years is itself too deeply stained with sins both of omission and of commission to warrant such a proceeding. And it would be intolerable to chide in their hour of suffering the French people who have paid so bitterly with blood and sorrow for the follies committed in their name. But life teaches nothing to those who draw a veil over the past and refuse to learn from its lessons. The children of France and her lovers, those whom she has nursed and those whom French civilization has inspired, have alike the right and the duty to speak their minds frankly in order that common suffering may bring understanding, and understanding that knowledge of the truth which sets men and nations free.

What is significant in all this sorry history is, of course, not the deeds  
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and mistakes themselves, but the spirit that underlay and inspired them. That spirit emerges most clearly in the response of the French to what are called the "ideologies" of the time. In the public life of France during the 1920's and 1930's five of these were paramount : the nationalist, totalitarian, authoritarian dogmas that found different but related expression in Italian Fascism and German National-Socialism ; Communism, no less totalitarian and authoritarian than the other two, but without their fiery nationalism and addressed primarily to another social class ; Roman Catholicism on its political side ; the notion of a Latin brotherhood ; and the ideas (often rather vague and ill-assorted) generally linked in the concept of the League of Nations.

These ideologies wove strange and alarming patterns in French life and French policy. All of them influenced French external affairs at various times and to a varying extent. The first two (counting—somewhat illegitimately—Fascism and Nazism as one) affected French domestic policies even more deeply. Most of them—the League of Nations was the notable exception—in different degrees warred with, corroded, and undermined the prevailing belief in democracy upon the principles of which (in their French form) the institutions of the Third Republic were founded.

Before the War of 1939 French politics presented an extraordinary picture of fissure and confusion. Parties were deeply divided from one another. Political rancour was intense and bitter. Personal feuds often exacerbated it. In the struggle for power, manœuvre was unending. But there was no clarity in the scene, no evidence of a definite underlying trend, no manifest sign that any one group, section, or party would prevail.

In this bewildering hurly-burly many Governments of widely differing sympathies, colours, and connexions held office from time to time. Each contributed in greater or lesser degree to the domestic decisions and external acts that in the end led to war, defeat, and collapse. Much ink has flowed in partisan attempts to fix the major responsibility for the mistakes committed during these fatal years. Most of it has been wasted. It is true, for example, that tenderness for authoritarian ideas led many Frenchmen to welcome the emergence and growth both of Italian Fascism (which was not intrinsically dangerous to France) and of German National-Socialism (which was). A similar tenderness on the other side of politics led other Frenchmen to regard Soviet Russia with sentimental benevolence and to attribute the qualities of a New Jerusalem to her social institutions and the characteristics of a Galahad among

nations to her military strength and foreign policy. Yet other Frenchmen cherished the chimera of a Latin Brotherhood. That Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Communist Russia all fostered these delusions by cloaking their true face and real aims behind a most skilful and seductive propaganda is beside the point—though it is not beside the point that many Frenchmen were only too anxious to be deceived. In any case, the delusions remained. Their influence was seen perhaps at its worst during the Spanish War, when French policy towards Spain disregarded almost entirely the considerations which the interests of France laid down in order to follow as though bewitched the dictates of the warring ideologies.

But parties and ideologies were mere externals. The essential fact about French politics before this war was that they reflected and expressed profound cleavages within the nation itself. In the main, those cleavages were social and economic. They represented the anxieties and fears of the propertied, possessing, and powerful classes in the face of the discontents and aspirations of great masses of poorer and less privileged people. At bottom, the cleavages arose from the attitude of Frenchmen of different classes and social positions to one another and to the State. The average Frenchman was strikingly devoid of an effective sense of public responsibility. This lack expressed itself both in attitude and in acts. In France there was much talk about "*la patrie*"—but too little of the personal sacrifice which alone can convert sentiment into action. Millions of Frenchmen were doubtless ready to die for France; far too few were willing to live for her at the cost of genuine effort to meet public needs. Too few again were prepared to adjust their own privileges or curtail their own demands so as to enlarge the well-being of less privileged fellow-countrymen. In a word, the French tended to take too much out of the State and to put too little into it. The well-nigh universal condonation, not to say approval, of successful tax evasion was merely one sign of this attitude. There were many others. And the all too frequent harshness and rapacity in the attitude of French employers as a class towards labour was at once a cause and a consequence of the narrow-minded materialism and graspingness which French workers—and especially French labour leaders—often showed when their turn came.

Irresponsibility towards the State, class egotism, and private selfishness bred suspicions, hatreds, and fears, which in time created the social, economic, and political cleavages of pre-war France. To these cleavages

(which Italy and Russia—and above all Germany—deliberately fomented and encouraged) was largely due the “Fifth Columnism” which contributed substantially to France’s military defeat. Neither such cleavages nor their underlying causes were unique in France. Most other Western countries were similarly divided. With Germany and Italy, the great Western exceptions to this rule, we are not here concerned. But whereas elsewhere among the Western democracies the sense of common nationhood proved strong enough in the end to close these emotional gulfs in the face of external danger—a truth which the temporary success of relatively few malcontents and traitors in Holland and Norway barely qualifies, and which the subsequent almost universal hatred of their German conquerors confirms—France was a nation divided against itself; and in France the divisions remained until it was too late.

The consequences of France’s party, social, and class divisions spread very far and went very deep. The paralysis they induced in the political machine brought parliamentary institutions into disrepute. They corrupted much of the French Press. They blinded those whom they inspired to the real meaning of German policy. They therefore helped to keep understanding of the growing German danger from the masses. Finally, during the months of war, the extraordinary rigours of the French censorship—itself an institution inspired by social and political fears—with perverse but successful determination withheld all vital knowledge from the people until catastrophe had overtaken them.

But even these deep political and social cleavages do not fully explain the French collapse. They leave unexplained the fact that, in her hour of crisis, France lacked the vitality to overcome them. They provide no understanding of the monotonous, deadly mediocrity that characterized French politics as a whole—the rare exceptions only proving the general rule—not merely between the Great War of 1914–18 and the War of 1939, but for fifty or a hundred years. They do not account for the astounding fact that the French Army and the French General Staff failed three times in a generation to prepare France properly for war—in 1870 and in 1914 as well as in 1939; or that the three failures were all similar in essential pattern and differed only in superficial detail; or that the civil authorities who bore final responsibility for the nation’s safety neither learned the lessons of the past nor even called their military co-adjutors to account in time. Finally, France’s inability to overcome her political cleavages must also be explained.

One explanation goes back to the Great War of 1914–18. France, it

is said, never recovered from war-weariness, nor did she ever overcome her sense of her tremendous losses during that devastating struggle, or of the enfeeblement with which those losses threatened her stable population in the face of Germany's steadily mounting numbers. Certainly French losses between 1914 and 1918 were appalling. They cut more from her stock than from the stock of any other belligerent. They fell like a plague on every household in the land. Nor could the rising generation forget them ; for if empty places were not a sufficient reminder, the war memorials in every village jogged the memory of those who forgot.

As far as it goes, this explanation is true. It helps, for example, to account for the ideas of those French thinkers who during the 1930's crystallized their sense of France's relative weakness among the Great Powers into shimmering visions of French civilization quietly cultivating the beauties of its own garden in isolation from the rest of the world. But such thinkers not only conjured away the practical difficulties attendant on their schemes. They also disregarded the essential fact that civilization is an adjunct of strength flowing from vitality in harmony with itself and the world because it is facing and solving successfully the problems that life perpetually brings.

It was in this respect above all that France had been failing. For several generations in succession her rulers and leaders in many varied fields of activity had not dealt adequately with the major problems of her social, political, and national life. Sometimes their failures were expressed in mistaken decisions and ill-advised acts of state. Sometimes they appeared in semi-private economic relations in the shape of harsh, grasping, and tyrannical attitudes—or in the unreasoning, rebellious reactions which such attitudes in turn evoked. Sometimes they took the form of bad personal example.

The stable population of France was to a large extent one expression of this failure. French numbers were kept down at a fairly steady level fundamentally because life was much pleasanter and many difficulties never arose if children were not too plentiful. In such conditions the artistry and individuality for which France is rightly renowned found ample outlet. But individuals often grew more self-centred and more irresponsible in consequence. Industrially a similar choice was made. As between the unpleasant massiveness and dreary routine of large-scale modern industry on the one hand and the products of craftsmanship and highly skilled technique on the other, France chose the latter. The

consequences were often profitable for the individual—but enfeebling for the state.

Such choices as these had their advantages and their compensations so long as the society which made them was not unduly strained. French life possessed, for example, qualities of charm, spaciousness, and cultivation such as no other modern nation could provide. But were these qualities unfailing signs of social and spiritual health? Could France as a whole—and especially the French ruling groups upon whom responsibility primarily rested—be regarded, even before 1939, as possessing the full vigour of robustness and strength? The often febrile tone of her leaders; the laxity—not to say corruption—of business practice and of financial, moral, and sexual standards which, though of course not universal, was all too widespread; the countless political, social, and economic problems which, because unsolved, sapped the strength and corroded the spirit of France—all these facts answer with a melancholy negative. Defeatism—far too often encountered during the months of war, and itself the product of the same lack of social will to which the unsolved problems testified—as well as the curious ideas of “regeneration through suffering” which floated for years in the circles afterwards prominent at Bordeaux, provide further evidence to the same effect. The perverse notion that regeneration might lie along the road of defeat contains, incidentally, the one quasi-moral justification for France’s surrender in 1940. But that belief cannot have been widely and genuinely held. Many of those at Bordeaux certainly had no better reason for surrender than fear for their possessions, their careers, or their skins. To others the doctrine of regeneration by suffering was merely a hypocritical cloak for personal ambition and selfish hopes. But the few who possessed sincerity and spiritual insight—they were unfortunately not conspicuous among the members of the Bordeaux Government—did discern truly that at the root of France’s troubles lay a spiritual evasion whose origins went far back in French history—perhaps to the exhaustion of the Napoleonic wars, perhaps to the internecine strife and bloodshed that followed the Revolution of 1789, perhaps to yet more distant years.

“Men do not merely submit to salvation. They create it. And they must have the ability to create it for themselves.” Thus the great Clemenceau, the man who more than any other single Frenchman by sheer will and personal force brought his country through the war of 1914–18 among the victors. Clemenceau’s words were written towards the end of his long and turbulent life in a book (*Demosthenes*) which was

nominally a biography of the greatest statesman Greece produced during the years of Athenian decay, but which was really a study of the problems of contemporary France. The anxieties and fears which Clemenceau felt were in fact only too well founded. The rulers and leaders of France did fail spiritually to create her salvation in the renewed struggle with Germany which broke out into war twenty-one years after her previous victory ; and there was then no Clemenceau to rescue her. Sooner or later the harvest of that long spiritual failure had to be gathered. France reaped it at Bordeaux.

But Bordeaux was not, could not be, the end. None who knew France could doubt that Bordeaux represented the immolation of a class, the failure of a minority, which had preferred the pleasures of easy living and the privileges of power to the responsibilities of leadership and the obligations of social life. The French people as a whole were in a different case. Their reserves of insight, feeling, and strength—tried and proved by the storms of centuries—would assuredly withstand the tribulations of defeat and, when the hour struck, would help to create the conditions of victory. In 1941 those who truly loved France, wherever they might be, therefore had faith that her people would safely pass through their valley of the shadow, and that, renewed in spirit by their sufferings, they would spread again throughout the world that light of French civilization which belongs to the enduring glories of mankind.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE WAR IN THE AIR

BY AIR-COMMODORE L. E. O. CHARLTON, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

IN Volume III of *THE WAR OF 1939* the chapter dealing with the air brought events down to the end of May 1940, though the time period was slightly extended to include the Dunkirk evacuation scene, which was completed on the early morning of June 4th. The following pages continue that account for the next six months, that is up to November 30th of the same year. There will not be sufficient space in which to deal adequately with offshoots of the air war, such, for instance, as isolated incidents at sea, and the main threads, only, of the unfolding sequence of events will be treated with a due attention to detail. These main threads are five in number, and are as follows. The air battle of Britain in its successive phases. Our own reciprocal offensive. Italy, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. Greece. The West Atlantic. These will each be taken in their turn, and, although the account may slightly suffer as a continuous chronicle, the attempt will be to present a picture of the whole in five main parts.

The sequel to Dunkirk was, of course, the military collapse of France, a disaster to which greater force was given by the attendant circumstance of Italy's appearance on the scene of war, thus giving us another foe to fight at the very moment we had lost our one and only ally. But that untoward event gave us, as it happened, no immediate concern. In anticipation of Mussolini's jackal tendencies we had already taken our Mediterranean precautions, and it would be several months at least before his plans for seizing Egypt could reach maturity. Danger no doubt existed in the Middle East, but it was not threatening. The grave peril that confronted us lay at our threshold, and invasion was its name.

It was only natural for the Nazi High Command to be cock-a-hoop in those early days of June. Their armies had walked over the Low Countries and Northern France, and were now busy trampling the remainder of our Ally's territory. Nothing, seemingly, could withstand

their onset, and was then Britain, the arch-foe of them all, to halt victorious Germans in their military stride, just because a salt-water ditch was there to separate them from a new, and final, conquest ? Perish the thought !

But even Hitler knew that he must first take one preliminary step before the rest could follow. The air power of Britain must be destroyed in advance of the landing of his legions, for otherwise they would suffer crippling loss before they could hope to gain a firm foothold on our shores. He knew the spirit and determination of our airmen, who had so severely handled his in the recent fighting, and he knew that the launching of a vast invasion process with the Royal Air Force rampant overhead would be to cast his bread upon the waters with no possibility, at any time, of its return. Just a few days, therefore, for the regathering and the refurbishment of his battered squadrons, a battle royal or two, and then, hey presto ! British air power would be no more and the westernmost citadel would fall like all the others.

It must be said in Hitler's favour, and to excuse the boasting of the man, that the prospect, as he regarded it, was fair indeed. There was the matter, first, of German air superiority—in numbers, that is, not in individual fighting worth, for man to man, and machine against machine, we were easily the better of the two. It is possible that at this period the "Luftwaffe" was roughly two and a half times the size of the Royal Air Force as far as the units of the latter were disposable in the coming battle. For the Middle East was a constant drain on British air power, and the whole weight of the Nazi air force in its entire undivided strength was available to be thrown into the fight for Britain. This disparity in numbers, in place of the equality which had been on the lips of statesmen for the past ten years, meant that the enemy could afford severe losses when he came across in force, believing that in the air, as on the ground below, mass must eventually prevail in combat.

In the next place the new geographical situation was wholly to the enemy's advantage. It was, indeed, ideal, an aviation dream come true ; roughly stated it brought the air power of Germany to England's doorstep, whereas our own was as far away as before from the territory of our foe. From the rival bomber point of view this signified short air journeys for the Nazi aircraft, as against long flights for our own machines, an additional disadvantage being that the bulk of German territory trended eastwards, whereas the British Isles were long and narrow, and lay adjacent to the continental coast. It was no effort for the bomber-

aircraft of the enemy to cover the whole of the United Kingdom throughout its length and breadth, paying particular attention to those areas where industry abounded. They could sacrifice a proportion of their fuel-load for a bigger weight in bombs, and at demand they could pay twice-nightly visits. Add to these distinct advantages an overwhelming numerical superiority, and it would not be an overstatement to declare that for every hundredweight of high explosive carried by our bomber force the enemy could carry four. Since then home manufacture and foreign purchase have sensibly reduced the gap, though the goal of parity, considered only as a stage towards definite superiority in numbers, is still to be attained. The expansion of our aircraft industry is somewhat restricted by a need to re-equip the army, itself in process of increase. In Germany, however, the land forces have already nearly all they want, owing to the preference of guns for butter over a period of years, and the needs of Nazi air power can receive priority when industrial floor-space is allotted. Our peak of production will in time be higher than the Nazi output, while our types, it is fondly to be hoped, will always keep the lead with which they started. But we have much ground to cover first, and meanwhile we must grin and bear. The blows we deal are scientifically planted, and are calculated, in a game of bald endurance, to cripple the Nazi war machine at a faster rate than the enemy can weaken ours.

The contiguity of German-occupied territory to England's shores brought a further benefit to the Nazi plans for the projected air campaign. For day-bombing purposes—and for a long time the enemy pinned his faith to that particular technique of attack—the hostile bomber-aircraft could on all occasions come over with a fighter escort in attendance. In ordinary circumstances the bomber air crews could thus attend strictly to the business at hand, secure in the belief that the accompanying Messerschmitts, 109's and 110's, were fully capable of dealing with obstruction from the British fighters. In such a combination the enemy saw his road clear to the complete air victory which was the first item on the programme of invasion, and, taking all the facts into consideration, he can hardly be blamed for feeling optimistic over the result.

So much for the immediate prospects in the prolonged air battle that was so soon to break, the tactics of which have been thus foreshadowed. In the field of strategy the enemy should have also held the winning cards. For his recent conquests, beginning with the successful invasion of Norway and ending with the subjugation of nearly two-thirds of France, all of which had been brought about within a period of six weeks, had

described a semicircle round one-half of Britain extending from Brittany in the south to the bridge of Norway's nose, by Trondheim Fiord. It is true that a varying width of water intervened between the British Isles and the European coastline, from a hundred miles at Ushant to thrice that distance at Stavanger, but such paltry mileage is hardly reckonable in flight at a rate approaching five miles a minute, and the points of entry for aircraft flying over Britain from the conquered territories now extended along our south and eastern seaboard from Land's End to John o' Groat's. This situation did not greatly affect us in the north and east, and opposite the Straits of Dover. Our air defences had been well prepared to meet attack from those quarters, which had been long regarded as the only directions from which danger need be apprehended. Fighter stations had been established inland from north to south in accordance with that defensive strategy, and anti-aircraft units, with all ancillary services, had been similarly disposed.

But on our south and south-west seaboard west of Dover, we had not foreseen encirclement, and the result was that in those regions we found ourselves outflanked. The bomber stations lying back from the fringe of interception were now exposed to enemy attack by aircraft setting out from Brittany, the careful system of protection which had been devised to meet the normal occasions of a war being now defeated by the unhappy fact of France's downfall. Not only were the various stations of the Bomber Command thus threatened by air attack developing from an unexpected quarter, but the industrial life of Western England, her ports on that side, her naval harbours, and her calculated security, were all alike endangered by the fall of France. It is no exaggeration to say that when our southern flank of air defence was turned by the enemy's occupation of French aerodromes in Normandy and Brittany, that part of England comprising her west and south-west areas lay supine beneath a sky from which the Nazi aircraft, by day as well as night, might hurl down bombs with practical impunity.

In these untoward circumstances, whatever adjustments that could be devised were hastily put into operation, and there was a considerable reshuffling of air units to accommodate necessity. What ground defences could be spared were transferred to the newly threatened part, although it meant an inconvenient, and at times a risky, thinning out. We had not an overplus of anti-aircraft batteries, of searchlights or balloons, and the very fact that we had not stinted to supply the Expeditionary Force with these needful accessories increased the

difficulty of spreading out the available resource in these respects. But it was the problem of redistributing our fighter squadrons that teased us most, the difficulty being to avoid that fatal thing in war, a compromise.

The south coast of England is about 300 miles long, or, in terms of flight, an hour in the air. Manifestly bombers entering over the extreme south-western corner, intent on the attack of, say, Bristol Channel ports, could not well be intercepted by fighters stationed in south-eastern parts, more especially if an air fight were developing over Kent or Sussex. Redistribution of fighters, therefore, there had to be, though necessarily in such a manner as not to denude the defences in a vital place in exchange for additional protection in a less threatened area. It must be remembered that we were strictly on the defensive in the air, and that the principal task of the Fighter Command was to destroy invading aircraft. But a perimeter defence, as was our fighter disposition for the protection of our soil, has always the one weakness that the enemy can attack at any chosen point, or points, in feint or force, while the defenders, unless strong everywhere, must constantly adjust themselves to new, and surprising, situations. Thus a battle might develop over the Thames Estuary and gather a force of British fighters to that area while hostile bombers, prompt to take advantage of the situation, could come in over Lyme Bay and proceed to Cardiff unmolested. Obviously counter-measures must be taken, and, in the circumstances, such could only take the form of stationing fighter units in the unprotected districts, transferred from that portion of the long defensive line which best could bear the loss. This was not exactly compromise, for that term bespeaks a static condition in the disposal of air units. It was more in the nature of an *ad hoc* series of solutions of an ever-present problem, involving constant change, quick transference, and a general elasticity of air power.

Such was the general situation before the resumption of the great battle against Britain, which had been momentarily interrupted while the *coup de grâce* was being administered to France. That is not to say that there was ever a complete cessation of air activity on the Nazi part, as most certainly there was not on ours. Indeed, it was during the latter half of June that our bomber force, released from the immediate necessity of attacking enemy troop concentrations and communication points in rear, put into practice the useful lessons of the leaflet raids and soared over German territory, far and wide, to visit and attack with unerring accuracy the essential products of the Nazi war machine.

Neither was the enemy idle in his turn. His aircraft set out regularly on night-bombing expeditions, and few days passed on which there was not combat over our coastal waters and on certain east- and south-coast towns. But no strategic plan was yet discernible as an outcome of the energy expended by the enemy. The raiding was sporadic and the fighter activity had no appearance of a concentrated purpose. The ball was kept a-rolling, but it seemed to lack direction. And then, at the very end of June, a change came on the scene. The Nazi High Command had liquidated their business with the French, Italy had been thrown a bone, and undivided attention might now be paid to the stubborn British race.

Since the air battle of Britain really started in the declining days of June, 1940, it has, like all prolonged contests between armed forces, assumed a variety of complexions, each succeeding phase of the attack being, as with combat on the ground, an attempt to bring pressure variously to bear, usually for the reason that preceding tactics have not borne fruit. At least a half-dozen plans of campaign in the air were thus tried out in the six-month period, ending on November 30th, with which this chapter deals. The first was intensive attack on Channel convoys as they passed the Straits of Dover hugging England's shore.

The strategy of this was obvious. By depriving us of the sea-route through the Straits of Dover, the Port of London would be put largely out of action, or would work under tremendous, and increasing, difficulty. Other east-coast ports would be similarly, though in less degree, affected, and in consequence an extra burden would be laid on Bristol, Liverpool, and Glasgow, all accessible to Nazi bombers flying by day from the coast of Brittany, and by night from anywhere. Thus the increasing traffic in and out of Britain's west-coast ports, unloading delays, and general congestion would provide a better target for the bombs, and this in turn would clutter up the goods yards, cause the country's distributive system to adjust itself to new conditions, and create confusion universally until, not unlike phlebitis in the human body, the gradual opening up of new channels of supply restored the circulation.

All through July the enemy concentrated his main efforts by day on shipping in the Channel and by night on West of England ports. There was little to be done about the latter, for then, as now, very small risk attached to night-bombing : the A.R.P. services and shelters functioned on behalf of citizens, while the ground defences were doing what they

could to spoil the bombers' aim, keep them high, and thus minimize material damage. But the daylight attacks on shipping were much easier to deal with. Our fighter stations in the south-west corner of the country were kept ever on the alert and, at the first indication of enemy activity, were up and at them. Then took place an endless series of combats in the Channel air as the dive-bombers of the enemy were sent hurtling to the surface of the water, and as our Hurricanes and Spitfires met the escorting Messerschmitts and took on odds of five, and ten, to one high up in the blue. These latter battles spread often inland, and the people of Kent inhabiting the coastal districts were daily witness of the dog-fights that went on overhead, with their accompaniment of machine-gun rat-a-tat, shrill whistling as the aircraft dived, vapour streamers in the air, parachute descent, and the smoke of oil and fuel on fire.

During this phase of the air fight our pilots more than held their own, and the result was given out each day by press and B.B.C. in a manner to which the public was becoming well accustomed: for every British fighter lost the enemy losing three or four among their dive-bombers and the escort. Thus in July 212 enemy aircraft were destroyed by our pilots, their own losses amounting to 49. One advantage we did hold in this and all succeeding stages of the fight. For the most part the air engagements took place over English soil, so that the descending parachutists, forced to abandon their machines in mid-air, were promptly taken prisoner, if an enemy, or in due course reported for duty at their stations if belonging to the R.A.F. The former were a dead loss to their side, but the latter lived to fight again. This happy situation considerably diminished the British total loss, although in varying degree. On very rare occasions none of our pilots landed safely, but otherwise the public learnt with extreme gratification, at the end of each day, to expect a proportion saved from their abandoned aircraft that frequently exceeded 25 per cent.

Meanwhile our convoys passed, and ships still sailed southwards from the estuary of the Thames. There were casualties among them when the dive-bomber's aim was accurate, and so the units of convoys were more carefully selected as to speed and size. But the Nazi air offensive did not put a stop to traffic in the Channel altogether. Moreover, the dive-bombers, on which the enemy had placed a firm reliance, were suffering terribly. These specialized aircraft, built to sustain the strain of almost vertical descent with engine on and fully loaded, and to deliver

their projectile in prolongation of their line of flight, were potent weapons if not distracted from their task, and most especially against ships at sea. But in the process of delivering an attack they were highly vulnerable, almost like a sitting bird, to the fighter on their tail. Hence the reason for the escorting Messerschmitts, the rôle of which it was to occupy our fighters while the bombers dived. The plan, however, did not work out according to the book, for while air combat was going on high up above, a proportion of British fighters were wont to pay exclusive attention to the dive-bombers, with disastrous results to the latter's aim and continuance in flight.

So ended, in the opening days of August, the enemy's hard endeavour to seize control of the waters of the English Channel by sinking ships, and by the assumption of air mastery in that belted region. It had failed, though not from want of trying, and the attempt had extended in a varying strength of effort over a period of five weeks. The "Luftwaffe" had received another drubbing at the hands of British pilots, following on its severe handling over Northern France and Belgium, and it speaks well for the discipline and hardihood of its personnel that they plunged into the next phase of the fight seemingly with vigour unimpaired. The attempt had failed, so what was next to do? By mid-August other tactics were in full swing.

In elaborating the next phase of attack, Goering and his air chiefs must have argued thus. We will get no farther, they grudgingly admitted, until we have smashed the British fighter force. It may be good, but there is very little of it—while our Messerschmitts can fill the air. We can never get on with this invasion business unless we can control the nearby air, for it is not possible to land our airborne troops, and thus secure a bridgehead for the main landing operation, as long as these Hurricanes and Spitfires fly around. Let us therefore proceed to make a deadset at them in the air and on the ground. The Channel water is ours for the asking, now we will proceed inland.

So must they have argued and, following on that decision, a series of air attacks were launched on our southern fighter bases for the next three weeks. The idea underlying this scheme was so to push our air defences back, destroying them as far as possible in the process, that the atmosphere would be calm in south-east England for the first step towards invasion, the effective occupation of an area adjacent to the landing points by military formations conveyed by air. It is easy to see how this plan of campaign, had it succeeded, would have facilitated the major

operation. It was ambitious like the one preceding, and like that it failed. But it did contain the promise of a full success, and it was in those days more than in the following that our fighter pilots truly earned the Prime Minister's sincere and eloquent tribute when he declared in the House of Commons that *never before in history had so much been owed by so many to so few.*

For see what would have been the immediate result if our fighter force had been destroyed, or so severely crippled that mere weight of numbers must have prevailed against superior spirit and determination ! In the first place, the Nazi troop-carrying aircraft, without opposition from the air such as fighters can alone provide, could have come over in swarms to land, or eject by parachute, thousand upon thousand of soldier specialists, equipped and trained for the very purpose of preparing the way for the seaborne columns of invasion. At the points selected for disembarkation enemy bombers of every type would be simultaneously busy battering the local defences to a pulp, hampered only by anti-aircraft fire from the ground and, in the general hurly-burly, not reckoning their losses. Worst of all, perhaps, our own bombers, to whom would be committed the grim and essential task of sinking the enemy transport vessels on their way across the short sea passage and of attacking the invasion ports, would have to work uncovered by any form of overhead protection by their fighters, and would in addition suffer continual attack from the clouds of Messerschmitts intent to shoot them down. British bombers, owing to their armament and all-round field of fire, can render an excellent account of themselves, if flying in formation, against attack by fighters. But they cannot bomb effectively as well as fight, especially when formation flying is not demanded by the situation, neither can they continue to put up resistance against relays of fighters, if only on the score of depleted magazines. Without adequate protection they would be overborne entirely, those not falling on the spot being overtaken and destroyed as they wended homewards with no more ammunition in their belts.

It is a grim picture that has been painted, but it does not exaggerate the result ensuing on the destruction of our fighter force if that fearful calamity had come about. For the wholesale depletion of our bomber force would follow, and we would then remain without air power of any kind, laid bare to ruthless assault and expectant of the fate of Poland, whose defeat was largely for that very reason. The enemy played for a large stake and he had capital behind him.

The aerodrome offensive, as it might be called, had no better success than the attack on shipping, though in either case it is idle to deny that loss was caused and damage sustained. Some small tactical success did attach to the mass assault on our fighter bases in the south-east corner. How could it have been otherwise? Quantities of bombers coming over in waves with a close escort of Messerschmitts, choosing their own times and seeking one particular objective out of many, cannot be barred ingress to a space of sky. Some among the many will inevitably get through to their objective, and when a shower of bombs descends, the law of average will take care that they don't all miss. Moreover, the attacks were delivered with determination and with a spirit befitting the value of the prize at stake. Although the enemy did not get at any time within visible distance of accomplishing his aim, there were occasions when he had us guessing; not so much on account of the actual damage brought about, but because the strain on our fighter force was unremitting and exhausting. Certain of the bases were abandoned for a while as scenes of action, and then reoccupied. That sort of withdrawal became necessary here and there, just as an expert swordsman must occasionally give ground. But it is recovered when he rallies next, and so were also those aerodromes which had been unlucky when attacked. The line of our fighter defence was shaken in places, but on the whole it did not waver, and the sound strategical conception of the Nazi High Command was frustrated by the prowess of our pilots.

The enemy losses were enormous, while our own were mounting, during this phase of the general battle in the air. As on former occasions, our pilots continued the astonishing process of destroying enemy aircraft at the rudely calculated rate of three or four to one. Thus on August 15th, 180 were destroyed, with a corresponding British loss of 34 fighters, from which, however, 17 pilots reached ground safely. Again, three days later, on August 18th, the enemy losses amounted to 152 as against 22 British fighters missing and 12 pilots saved therefrom. These almost incredible figures of relative loss probably erred substantially on the conservative side. No estimate was ever made of non-fatal wounds inflicted in the course of combat, nor of damage to Nazi aircraft which might just permit the pilot to make his landing. Day after day this sort of shattering loss was inflicted on the enemy, and yet he came for more. Utterly regardless of a weakening morale, not to mention the material damage to his air power, he flung his squadrons at us in un-wearied fashion, seemingly intent on making this long-drawn effort the

fight to a finish which, in his opinion and with his weight in numbers, could only end in our defeat.

Curiously enough, our very success at this period gave serious food for thought, and brought an added danger with it. It may be astonishing to reflect that we could shoot down too many Nazi bombers, and yet it might have been the truth. That danger passed, most happily for us, though it is well to mention the sort of peril in which we stood. To understand it fully it must be repeated that, at the time, the enemy was wholly engaged in the destruction of our fighter force, and this he hoped to accomplish in two ways : by bombing the fighter bases in south-east England and the London area, and by victory in the course of combat in the air. He knew well how tough our pilots were, but he could rely on overwhelming superiority in numbers. Thus our fighters had a dual task to perform : to destroy the Nazi bomber-aircraft and so minimize the damage they could bring about, and equally to accept combat with the Messerschmitts at whatever odds. On the other hand, the Nazi fighters could concentrate on the single task of destroying Hurricanes and Spitfires, for that was all they were opposed to. When, therefore, we counted up the day's total, ours was always a mixed bag consisting of bombers and fighters belonging to the enemy. His bag, however, for what it amounted to, never held anything but British fighters.

Let us take the result of one particular day of fighting, September 15th. It belongs to the ensuing phase ; it was a monster success for us, and the figures were given out at the end of it in particular detail. On that day our pilots shot down 185 enemy aircraft, of which 131 were bombers and 54 were fighters. Our own losses on this glorious occasion amounted merely to 25, of which, incidentally, 14 pilots parachuted safely to the ground. Leaving the bombers out of the reckoning, because we are considering the matter as a fighter affair exclusively, the relative losses were thus 54 to 25 in our favour, or about two to one. It follows, therefore, that if the Nazi fighter force is twice as large as ours, with the potential behind it at the same ratio, then neither side has come off best on that particular occasion.

Supposing, however, as indeed did happen quite frequently, that the Messerschmitts in the bag only just balanced the total of British fighters missing, or that the latter, as also happened on occasion, were slightly in excess ? It would then follow that our fighter force was being denuded at a greater rate than that of the enemy, quite irrespective of the number of bombers there to swell the grand total. That was the danger which

confronted us and from which we luckily escaped owing to a change of tactics which the enemy introduced. In effect the Nazi bomber losses did not affect them greatly, in such large numbers were they then available. They were doing useful work in attacking British aerodromes, and bombing aircraft factories which were situated adjacently. But they were also helping matters by providing bait for British fighters which, in a general mêlée, would be vulnerable themselves to attack from Messerschmitts. A Hurricane or Spitfire shot down in flames was worth the loss of two or three bombers, for eventually, so must the enemy have argued, the British fighter force would be perceptibly weakened by losses relatively higher than the Messerschmitts were suffering.

So was the Nazi strategy again frustrated, and so was the enemy forced to try some other plan. During August 957 enemy aircraft had been indubitably destroyed, with a loss to us of 297 fighters, of which well over a hundred pilots had been saved. The specialized attack on aerodromes was given up, but hordes of Nazi machines continued to come over in daylight with a different object.

This time London was the chief target of assault. The third phase of the great air battle declared itself at the end of the first week in September, although indications of a change of plan were not wanting for some days prior to the main assault. The capital was subjected to a day and night bombardment from the air. The planes that came by daylight suffered in the usual manner at the hands of British fighter-pilots, but the after-dark attacks, being opposed only by the ground defences, were more successful.

The chief significance of this change in Nazi strategy was that we had enforced it by the successful action of our fighter force in repelling the determined effort to destroy it. Very little actual truth has ever penetrated Goebbels's propaganda barrage, and the councils of the German High Command are wrapped in deadly secrecy; but from neutral sources it had appeared of late that Goering was losing ground as an exponent of totalitarian warfare from the air. In truth he did have a good deal of failure to explain away. He had, for instance, boastfully denied the possibility of air bombardment over Germany, in spite of which it had become a nightly undertaking by our bombers, without undue risk and with a large accompanying measure of damage and destruction. The alarming losses of the "Luftwaffe" over England and the English Channel, during the past five weeks, also dented Goering's reputation, being a plain indication that German air power had, in some

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respects, been faultily constructed. It is probable that he and Ribbentrop were out of sympathy with each other at about this time, the latter ignorantly urging the mass bombing of London, where his social and diplomatic efforts had so signally failed during his ambassadorship, while Goering protested that it would only mean reprisal on Berlin. They both had Hitler's ear, and it is not hard to imagine the decision that was come to. Goering was given till the beginning of September to make his words good and cripple Britain's fighter power, and after that, if nothing further came of the continued effort, London might be bombed.

Although the above situation is imaginary, it is perhaps not very far removed from truth. The fact remains that, for the first time, the main efforts of the "Luftwaffe" were directed against a target which, whatever might be its value otherwise, was not a component of the British war machine. That is not to say that London was an illegitimate objective. Far otherwise! There was dockland and the warehouses nearby. It was the government centre from which issued the main direction of our effort in the war. It contained huge storage spaces for munitions and provisions, vast supplies of power for industrial production, and railway terminals that kept its life, and the life of England, going. And finally it was ringed around with factories that depended on that power supply and which, to an utmost possible extent, had been remoulded to produce the necessities of war. So much for the material significance of London as a bombing target. But there was an immaterial side to it as well.

For the capital is also a human ant-hill, with a population—in Greater London at its widest—of, say, over twelve million people. To destroy the city would thus be to smite a quarter of the total population of the country. In totalitarian war it is as legitimate to strike at the spirit of national resistance as at strictly military objectives. From either point of view London was a gold-mine, and thus, by plastering the area with bombs on a principle of hit or miss, every bomb let fall would surely find a billet. So the Nazis reckoned and thus they set to work.

The influence of Goering was traceable in the long continuance of the daylight assaults, which were kept up until well into October on the same scale of appalling loss that had hitherto obtained, while evidence of the rival school of thought was furnished by the night-long bombing of the metropolis by unending streams of aircraft which kept at a great

height and were only concerned to unload somewhere within the target area. The change of plan, however significant of failure in the past, brought no respite to our fighter pilots. For them the struggle was intensified, and it mattered nothing what the Nazi planes were trying to do, or whither they were bound, as long as they still came over to be shot down. But they were, on these occasions, defending London and enabling the life of London to continue, fighting the enemy back over Kent and Sussex, and over the capital itself whenever the Nazi planes got by. In September alone 1,969 enemy aircraft were destroyed in the course of fierce fighting ; our own losses, while still remaining low in comparison, were steadily rising as the time went on. In August and September we lost 615 fighter aircraft altogether, an average of ten each day, and although a good third of the pilots lived to fight again, it must be conceded that the Fighter Command must have had some anxious moments while bearing such a heavy strain.

The enemy night-bombers, however, were having it all their own way, for no means had then been discovered of causing them deterrent loss. They flew normally at great height, and they flew fast. Sound-lag concealed their presence overhead until they were on their way a mile or more. If a searchlight picked them up, they promptly took evasive action, and the A.-A. guns very seldom had a target at which to shoot. Heavy barrage methods were at first attempted, though with very slight concrete success. The lethal radius of the bursting charge was only about half the length of a cricket-pitch, and these destructive pin-points in space were lucky indeed to secure a hit. Moreover, the expenditure of ammunition thus entailed was too great to be regularly maintained, and although it gave heart to the people underneath, was little more than sheer waste when thus applied. London, and the other cities similarly selected for destruction, had no option but to grin and bear it.

In this fashion the battle was waged by day and night throughout September and early October, a death-struggle in the air during daylight hours and a visitation on the capital after dark. There was also activity over other parts, principally at night : Merseyside, the Midland manufacturing towns, South Wales, and the West of England each in turn received attention. But London remained the main objective throughout the period. It is the main objective yet.

At the end of September a quick change was observable in the daylight air. At last the enemy appeared to have had enough of losses, and

thereafter, although his daytime activities never quite ceased, he gave full rein to his night-bombers in an increasingly widespread fashion. By day it became the Nazi habit to send over fighter-bombers, which were no other than the Messerschmitts dressed up to bomb, with a reduced petrol load to compensate for carrying extra weight. These aircraft were also newly armoured, whether they carried bombs or not, the increased protection being also afforded at the expense of fuel and oil. It was an advantage given by the lesser distances they had to fly, and the result was immediately apparent in the total of enemy machines shot down. These fighter-bombers would come over at their ceiling height, an altitude that approximated to the high performance of our British fighters, and, if anything, the enemy machines were more manœuvrable than ours at those limits. In any case, it meant that there was no going up higher for either of them, and when they met in combat it was, generally speaking, on the level. The dive-tactics which our pilots universally adopted were thus put out of court, and although their fire-power was still superior, at the rate of 10,000 rounds a minute, the protective armour of the Messerschmitts was bullet-proof. Hence the sudden cessation of the big casualty figures of the recent past, as also the fact that our own loss began to approximate to that of the enemy.

As against this, however, there were compensatory factors. The bomb-load of the converted Messerschmitts was quite small, so that they executed no great damage, and there was little harm done if they kept at ceiling height; while as for those which did not carry bombs, merely covering the others, they might fly around to their heart's content as long as they stayed up.

Not quite at the same time as the cessation of the mass attacks by day, and the general diminution of daylight activity, though not long after it, a fourth phase in the Nazi plan of campaign opened up. The nightly bomber concentration on London was sensibly relaxed, and the energy thus released began to be applied on a new principle of assault. This was the selection of an important provincial centre each night for heavy air bombardment, wholesale destruction in this manner evidently appealing to the enemy as an effective method of further breaking our national will to war. London was thus relegated to a general list of objectives for air attack and all the other likely city targets were kept guessing as to which of them had drawn the "lucky" number until the actual assault occurred. It must not be thought that the whole weight of attack was thrown against each special night objective, for

such was far from being the case. There was almost always a general air activity over the Kingdom, far and widespread in effect, and few parts of the country escaped the sound of bomb explosions, or the sight of fire-crackers from our A.-A. guns as their shells burst in the sky, even if they were not actually the scenes of damage. But the particular centre chosen for the main attack was always bombed the long night through, the attempt being one of deliberate and complete destruction, of the razing of the place, rather than a mere passing raid.

Coventry was the first really heavily stricken victim of this selective method, and on that South Midland manufacturing centre, during the night of November 14th, a rain of incendiary and high-explosive bombs descended. Here, as in the case of London, the enemy was attacking a perfectly legitimate objective, for the ancient town is one of the chief centres of our war industries. Again, as with London and all the other centres marked down for destruction, the enemy was hitting at a dual target : the industrial components of the British war machine, and the workers who kept its wheels revolving. There is no need to particularize the various localities thus attacked, for any gazetteer will supply them. Most of our more important towns and cities, whether busy seaports, dock areas, or manufacturing districts, were visited in turn, and some among them many times. Such was the enemy's plan of action at the end of November, the closing period of this six-month survey.

To sum up : the air battle of Britain began in earnest with the fiercely sustained attacks on Channel shipping, a phase which was succeeded by the mass assaults on fighter bases in the south, and on the adjacent aircraft manufactories. Neither of these attempts had any great success, entirely owing to our fighter pilots, so that when the bombing of London inaugurated the third phase of attack the enemy stood self-confessed as having failed. London, also, carried on its city life in spite of the most widespread damage and destruction, and so the enemy, seeing that nothing further would be gained by continuing to make of it the one and only mark, launched his fourth phase by selective bombing of the principal provincial towns. These have all, without exception, most manfully withstood their trials of endurance and, as November went out, the spirit of their inhabitants was still unbroken. Let us now turn to the more congenial subject of our counter-offensive over Germany.

Great attention had always been paid to navigation in the Royal Air Force, and night-flying training was well advanced in the years

before the War. Bombing during the hours of darkness was the principal aim and object of all this preparation, for it had been well recognized, as the enemy found to his cost, that day-bombing in the face of fighter opposition was liable to incur deterrent loss unless a proper fighting escort could be provided. It was in the belief that the distances involved, in the case of war with Germany, would render such escorts impracticable that the training of night-bomber pilots had been steadily proceeding, and now we were to reap results from this strategic foresight. The leaflet raiding of the preceding months, on a gradually extending scale, had put the finishing touches to the navigational skill of the bomber air crews, and they were now prepared to drop high explosives instead of pamphlets, having become adept at path-finding through the enemy's night air and knowing the exact location of numerous objectives. Accordingly, they lost no time in going into action when the curtain rose in May, and thereafter, throughout the period of this review and far beyond, nightly and in all possible flying weathers they roamed over German territory, and the occupied regions, striking their hard blows at the vitals of the Nazi war machine.

There was day-bombing too, but not on an extensive scale, and the aircraft thus employed were usually directed towards the nearby invasion ports, adjacent aerodromes, and elsewhere within reasonable range of British bases where the enemy was making preparation and amassing his material for the widely advertised landing on our shore. Night-bombing, however, became our specialty, and with comparatively small loss to our bomber force, which was expanding all the time, our pilots and air crews unloaded regularly on their carefully selected targets.

In doing so they acted in observance of a principle from which there was neither necessity nor inclination to depart. They were out to do damage to the material strength of Germany at war, and to do aught else were a waste of energy and a useless expenditure of bombs. They were never sent out on roving missions to drop their loads at individual discretion, but were even ordered to return with bomb-racks full if prevented from carrying out their purpose. At Bomber Command Headquarters their activities were regulated with intense precision, a careful record kept, and the reports of each excursion tabulated with exceeding care. The Air Commander-in-Chief, to whom had been entrusted this responsibility, was concerned with one thing only: to strike at the enemy's war effort expressed in terms of material and the assets of production, and so, by skilfully and delicately directed blows,

the delivery of which was a matter of the nicest calculation, to halt it here, destroy it there, and, generally to slow it down.

There was no distraction from this vital plan, nor would there ever be except for occasional passing opportunities, as when the German Fleet might put to sea, or an urgent necessity, as when invasion plans were obviously being hurried to completion. An intricate plan for the bombing of military and industrial objectives inside Germany had been long prepared, and information had been accurately compiled from all available sources as to the varying importance of each target. A list of the numerous objectives thus attacked would be out of place in this short record, and most of the names, besides, are familiar to every ear. Let it suffice, then, in explanation of the principle on which we worked, to indicate their nature. Oil and petroleum products were a chief object of attack, for it is widely held that scarcity of fuel may bring the wheels of the Nazi war machine grinding to a halt. Petrol storage depots, therefore, hydrogenation plants, and ordinary commercial reservoirs, have undergone frequent bombings, more particularly the centres of synthetic oil production near Leipzig, Magdeburg, and Stettin.

Germany's railway system has also suffered from repeated blows, a peculiarly vulnerable target in her case owing to the general disrepair in which it was allowed to fall in the days before the war. Factories of all kinds which have been harnessed to the German war industry were searched out and attacked with accuracy. Her inland waterways, docks, aqueducts, and canals have been repeatedly and destructively bombed, while her two greatest ports, Hamburg and Bremen, and such aircraft bases as Nordeney, Sylt, and Borkum, have been selected for special and particular attention. Thousands of tons of bombs were thus dropped with discrimination, and with gratifying results, on the enemy's branching industries, and essential material, of war. A close analysis of these innumerable attacks would show the following distribution of the general effort of our bombers.

Rather more than one-third of the total weight of bombs was expended on important power-stations, oil refineries, oil-storage plants, aircraft factories, and munition centres. Something like a sixth was accounted for by successive attacks on canal systems, docks, and harbour shipping. A quarter was dropped on railway communications, including marshalling yards, terminals, and particularly important viaducts, while aerodromes received the rough remainder of the total.

The Ruhr district probably received a third of the attacks as being

still the core of Nazi war production, and that in spite of the removal of many factories to eastern, and less vulnerable, parts. The great armament works of Krupp at Essen, and the dozens of other munition towns within the Ruhr area from Munster to Cologne, engaged on the production of coal, oil machinery, chemicals, steel, and guns, make of its whole extent a lawful bombing target, while its distance from the English coast, under 250 air miles, makes it readily accessible to every type of British bomber.

But Germany has other munition centres which, although farther afield, have by no means escaped attention. Between Frankfurt and Stuttgart, with Mannheim as a halfway house, there are many plants, chiefly chemical works and oil refineries, and this area, especially its midway town, has been well bombed. Some 200 miles east of the Rhine lies another great munition area in the neighbourhood of Leipzig, chiefly notable for the gigantic hydrogenation plant for synthetic oil production at Leuna, based on the surrounding lignite coal deposits and capable, in ordinary circumstances, of delivering half a million tons a year. Magdeburg, sixty miles to the north and on the River Elbe, is a similar productive area, though on a lesser scale, and so also is Stettin, on the Oder. The two former places have been repeatedly visited by British bombers, and even the last, although a round trip of nearly 1,400 miles is involved, has several times been under air attack.

Berlin, which was first raided by the R.A.F. on August 25th, and which received its heaviest attack on November 1st, was visited some thirty times before the beginning of December, involving a flight of nearly 1,300 miles out and back from the nearest British base. It was good for the Germans to have their capital thus bombed, but it was done in no way of reprisal, for, like London, it bristles with objectives. On each occasion of attack our air crews were specially instructed as to their aim, and the targets so indicated consisted of such military objectives as railway-stations, power-stations, gas-plants, electrical works, blast-works, cable-works, oil reservoirs, armament factories, aerodromes, fuel storages, and aircraft manufactories.

It was of course inevitable that loss of civilian life and damage to non-military property should result from these activities. The bomb is not a weapon of precision yet, and any one of a host of reasons is sufficient to set it off its target. But it was the conscientious endeavour of our pilots and air crews to aim only at what they had been given to destroy, to take all reasonable risk to ensure accuracy, and in no case to unload

indiscriminately over the city or the area that contained the objectives selected for attack. Often they would come down low for better aim, and many times the machine in which they flew was inconveniently agitated by the rush of air resulting from nearby explosions. The enemy method and our own were quite distinct. His was to raze our cities from the air at an altitude approaching ceiling height, intent wholly on the destruction of what lay below and ever ready to excuse such wanton conduct by a plea of justification on the score of military necessity. We, on the other hand, were wholly concerned to destroy special targets of importance to the Nazi war machine, and if civil damage could not be avoided in the process, it was merely incidental to the undertaking.

The Germans are bad psychologists and, in following this course of conduct, argued on a false premise. As a race we were supposed, in Nazi eyes, to be effete, after having lived softly for so long. We were also a self-governing nation, and these two put together logically meant that the civilian population of the British Isles would bend easily beneath the rigours of war. A good way of hastening the process might be to attack it directly from the air, and hence the campaign of deliberate destruction of city life in the course of numerous assaults by day and night. But the reaction of the British population disappointed the Nazi expectation and disproved the force of logic ; for instead of throwing in their hands and crying aloud for peace at any price, they grew more fiercely determined to see the War through to its bitter end with every bomb that fell.

There is no doubt whatever that in a general computation, on either side, of the damage done by action from the air, counting it all in whatever be its nature, the destruction wrought on the United Kingdom is very greatly in excess of that inflicted over Germany. It is only natural that it should be so. Our bomber force is slighter, it has much farther to go, and Great Britain as an overall objective for the Nazi bombs is less than half the size of Germany. But the destruction wrought by German aircraft, if particularized, would be found to have hit civilian life far more than it has damaged our military structure, and in that sense the carefully conceived campaign has proved an utter failure. On the other hand, all the large success our bombers have obtained, excepting only that which is merely incidental to the blows they strike, has been against the enemy's war effort in all its many-branching rivers of production and on its accumulated material produced. The Nazi aircraft have dropped

a greater bomb tonnage than have ours, but it is inherently probable that on exchange we have done Germany more harm than she us.

In the face of that conclusion it is puerile to talk of reprisal bombing. It is usually the threat of reprisal that has effect in war, but with this enemy, whose populace is dumb and helpless, and who has a barbarian soul, there would be no appeal in such an attitude. Instead we would be diverting our own efforts uselessly, and doing so, moreover, in a manner indirectly dictated for us. We should be exchanging inefficiency for efficiency, surrendering initiative, and putting more value on a row of dwelling-houses burnt than on the conflagration which destroys an essential production plant. It is not a question of humanity or inhumanity, but of sheer common sense. If the total destruction of central Berlin by air attack were certainly to end the war in our favour, we should thoroughly deserve to lose it if we forbore on sentimental grounds, notwithstanding the wholesale loss of non-combatant lives that the process would entail. We should erase the word "reprisal" from our military vocabulary as a meaningless expression, and continue to belabour the Nazi war machine. And that, in fact, is exactly what we went on doing.

It is worth noting, in connexion with our strenuous counter-bombing offensive, that it was performed in spite of a succession of boastful utterances by Hitler's liegemen, up to the very commencement of the War and after, that the soil of the Fatherland would never be polluted by the descent of British bombs. And yet, apart altogether from the numerous leaflet and reconnaissance flights of a non-explosive character, German target-areas were being bombed from mid-May onwards at a rate of eight, at least, each night. A target area signifies the collection of several objectives so situated as to form a natural grouping for attack, such for instance as the docks, shipping, and naval stores in and about a naval base, and it was seldom that a round half-dozen of these collective groupings were not bombed on any single night. We were taunted, when the pamphlet bundles were going overboard, with hesitancy to drop high explosives lest terrible reprisal should be taken, and the presence of our bombers overhead in those early days was so explained to the gullible population. What the people must have thought, but not said, when the real attacks began will be known when the Nazi régime collapses at the conclusion of the War, and not before. For they are inarticulate and it is not of much importance what they think.

Goering himself made a personal statement on this subject, a month or so before hostilities, in special reference to the Ruhr district. "I

have convinced myself personally," he declared, " of the measures taken to protect the Ruhr against air attack. We will not expose the Ruhr to a single bomb dropped by enemy aircraft."

These vainglorious words were of a pattern with the boasts of other Nazi spokesmen, all of which were equally at fault. To such degree was protection lacking for the Ruhr when the British bombers got into their stride that the area has since received on an average one bomb for every three let drop ; so besprinkled has it been, in fact, that there is no room on an ordinary map for the marking of each separate attack, and a large-scale inset has had to be provided for the purpose.

The British and the Nazi attitudes in regard to bombing over each other's territory are typical of two such widely separated mentalities. " Not a single British bomb shall fall on Germany " was the boastful Nazi cry ; but " Some of the bombers will always get through " was the British manner. We were right and they were wrong.

The military defeat of France brought more consequences in its train than the exposure of Great Britain to invasion and sea encirclement, following on the German occupation of the French coast all along its length. For Italy entered the War on June 11th, just as our Ally was tottering to her fall, and at once an immense new area was added to the theatre of hostilities, entirely altering the situation in the Middle East. Heretofore that region, the security of which was so vital to our cause, had remained quiescent ; a region of Allied military force no doubt, but not an active scene of war. Italy had no intention at any time of coming in on the losing side, and until mid-May, by which date the Dutch had given up, the Belgians were being harried back, and the " bulge " had just been made in Northern France, there was no telling which way the cat was going to jump. French and British sea-power was dominant in the Mediterranean, Libya was sandwiched between Egypt and the possessions of France in North Africa, and Abyssinia, though with a strong and well-provided garrison, was in a state of isolation. The Allies were very favourably situated in the Middle East indeed, and Italy did well in those preceding months to keep away from trouble.

But when France fell everything was altered in a stroke. Our sea supremacy in the Mediterranean became doubtful, Libya became a threat to Egypt, our Syrian backdoor rusted on its hinges, and Abyssinia had suddenly to be taken into account as a menace to the safety of the Sudan. Worst of all, this sudden change took place just as we were reeling from

our military disaster in France, and when the invasion menace was assuming a material shape. British forces in the Middle East henceforth were to stand alone, and the military situation now became most precarious.

It is well to understand the full implication of another British military disaster in that part of the world before proceeding with the part played by British air power in the operations that ensued. Briefly, the Middle East, which comprises the basin of the Eastern Mediterranean and all those territories, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey, that lie around its seaboard, is a short cut by water, land, and air to the countries bordering on the Indian Ocean and the West Pacific. A Power well entrenched in that region of the globe as is the British Commonwealth of Nations, and in friendly alliance with its neighbour, Turkey, can at need deny passage eastwards to any other Power in Europe, such as Germany, which is of aggressive tendency and anxious for expansion in that direction. Our prestige as a World Empire is bound up intimately with the retention in the Eastern Mediterranean of the influence and position we have held so long. But of more importance still is an absolute necessity to guard the portals of the continental areas that lie beyond, the greater part of which belong to us and contain wealth of all description. If our hold on this part of the Mediterranean seaboard were relaxed or prised from our grasp, the flood-gates would be opened and through them would pour the Nazi hordes to wrest from us the oil of Iraq, the riches of India, and eventually the two Dominions beyond the seas, Australia and New Zealand. We might indeed be able to fight on still, but sorely handicapped. For the transference of the military guardianship to a hostile power by force of arms would bestow on it, and simultaneously deprive us of, the immense advantage of the short cut.

If we were to be ousted from the Middle East, it might not be quite the end of us, but it would mean the beginning of a process of strangulation ; and not all our might at sea, nor all our sovereignty along the ocean routes, might compensate for the land continuity enabling our enemy to proceed out of Europe, and into Asia, on an uninterrupted march. For these reasons we have, in the past, been peculiarly sensitive in that quarter, and we assembled a large and growing military power there at the commencement of the War. But then we were in happy accord with our French Ally, and could contemplate the future with reasonable assurance. In the summer of 1940, however, the dream was shattered and we were confronted with a perilous situation. Let us see how we grappled with it.

The reply we made to Italy's declaration of war with our air arm was prompt and efficacious. In brief, we said it with bombs ! Neither the Italian motherland nor the African possessions of Italy were immediately within reach of our land and sea forces, but as a target from the air a great part of her territory, continental and colonial, lay below our bombers in a manner to invite attack. Mussolini raised his felon dagger on June 10th, and on the following day British aircraft of the Middle East Command raided aerodromes in Libya and Eritrea, while the South Africa Air Force, operating from their base in Kenya, bombed the frontier post of Moyale on the Abyssinian border in the south. That same night our bombers, setting out from English bases, visited Turin, Genoa, and other towns in Italy's industrial north. This latter process of attack would have been renewed from those French aerodromes which had remained in British use before we were driven by the force of circumstances to withdraw from Allied territory altogether ; but it was otherwise decreed. For the French prevented it, and drove their lorries over the airfield from which we intended taking-off in order to obstruct the operation. This was a curious proceeding, seeing that our Ally was still in the field, however distressful the condition of his fighting forces, but the underlying aim had a certain logicality. It was obvious that French resistance was fast dying to a finish, and that terms must soon be sought. The leaders of France therefore shrank from an offensive measure which would have stung Mussolini to reprisal and, possibly, postponed the armistice. Northern Italy was reprieved on that occasion. Very soon, however, our bombers recommenced their raids from England.

Here let us pause for a consideration of the Italian situation in the air, and from it. Actually we found ourselves in the unwonted position of holding the advantage from a strategical point of view, this applying both to our Metropolitan Bomber Force and to the R.A.F. in the Middle East. As regards the former, our heavy bombers could fly to Northern Italy and back, across the Alps, in the course of ordinary flight. The round trip varied from 1,200 to 1,400 miles—well within their range—and the military objectives in that part of the country were numerous. A very large proportion of Italy's war-production plants were situated in the area. For the most part they were run on electricity, and the hydro-electric installation that generated the power was in itself a worthy target for attack. We had insufficient bomber power, of the type required, to concentrate attention on the wide industrial region without unduly slackening our efforts over Germany. But we had enough to

take it in its turn, and this we proceeded to do at spaced intervals, with fair frequency, and with a gratifying measure of success. It is unnecessary to specify the succession of objectives thus attacked. They were all that offered in the opening of the Italian top-boot, and ranged from Genoa on the Ligurian Sea to Venice on the Adriatic.

It might have been expected that Italy would retort in kind, and yet she did not. Italian pilots had not received much training in night navigation on long flights, and besides that the bombing of Britain was clearly a Nazi perquisite. The "Regia Aeronautica," to give the Italian Air Force its national, high-sounding name, did not possess long-distance bombers in any considerable force, and the small additional weight that could thus be brought against us was hardly worth the venture. They were of better use in Africa, where there was an active front, and where their power could be felt. Our bombing offensive, therefore, over Northern Italy formed an air campaign which was peculiar in that it did not provoke the enemy to counter-attack directly. In that respect we were having it all our own way.

No other portion of the Italian boot was accessible to British bombers either from home bases or from Egyptian aerodromes ; its shin, instep, toe, sole, heel, and calf were alike beyond effective reach. Occasional special flights, it is true, might have been prepared from either end, but so thin a trickle of bombs would have resulted from such undue energy of preparation that, as an undertaking of war, it was not worth while. But an entirely different state of affairs prevailed in North and Northwest Africa, and here the situation in the air was peculiarly to our advantage. We could hit out freely in all directions and run very little risk in the doing of it.

It was not until after Hitler had seated himself well in power that Mussolini became openly an aggressor, a condition of *status quo* in the Mediterranean having been formerly his chief concern. In 1934 the process of militarizing Libya had begun. Its main harbours and its frontiers were fortified ; military aerodromes were spaced about ; strategic roads were built ; an exceedingly large garrison was stationed there ; ex-Service men were encouraged to settle ; and nothing was left undone to prepare Libya as a base for an advance on Egypt. The same thing went on in Italian East Africa, where Eritrea and Jubaland were similarly prepared as bases for the approaching conquest of Abyssinia. Thus, in the years preceding the outbreak of the War, two large areas of assembly, Libya and the colonies in East Africa, strongly garrisoned and well

provided with military landing-grounds, were made ready for the nut-cracking strategy by which Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan were to be converted to Italian ownership in revival of the glory of Ancient Rome. In consequence of all this military activity both areas fairly bristled with near and distant objectives for our bombers, once the War had spread beyond the boundaries of Europe. For almost everything within them was there for the fulfilment of a military purpose, and not very much of a peaceful significance could be found. With regard to Libya, the military posts were adjacent to, or abutted on, the coast, so that the delimitation of sea from land facilitated the location of the targets ; while as to Italian East Africa, the mere fact of its complete isolation from all contact with the rest of Italy, the location of its Red Sea ports and settlements, and the sparsely distributed centres of importance in Abyssinia, all assisted towards a like result. Hence it was that our bombing offensives in those parts were so uniformly successful and so directly aimed to do a maximum of damage. Their task was laid out for them like a patient on an operating-table, and all they had to do was to cut and come again.

As against this bomber paradise of ours, the Italian Air Commands in Libya and East Africa were far from happily placed. Egypt was not at war with Italy, and Great Britain was quite pleased that it should be so. Although a non-belligerent Egypt might prove a decided handicap to us in the case of a reverse, it was otherwise highly convenient that we could make all use of her territory for our forces in the Middle East. With the exception of the Nile Delta at one end of her river-backbone, and of Khartoum at the other, there was little else accessible to the Italian aircraft for the purposes of air attack. Mussolini had no desire to bring against him another adversary in the war by bombing Cairo, besides which he was extremely chary of outraging Mohammedan sentiment by the destruction of Moslem seats of learning and cathedral-mosques. Alexandria and Khartoum were lawful bomb objectives and were visited as such, the one harbouring the British Mediterranean Fleet, and the other being a garrison headquarters exclusively in British occupation to oppose an Italian invasion, from Eritrea, of the Upper Nile. Our purely military posts in the Sudan and along the Mediterranean seaboard of Egypt were also frequently the objects of Italian air attack, but they were indistinct as targets and were capable of self-defence. Taking it by and large, the situation in the air, for the reasons mentioned, was very distinctly in our favour from an air-offensive point of view, our own bombers having

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a plenitude of targets, all of which were of a military nature, while Italy's bombers were badly off in that respect.

The question of the reinforcement of air power in the Middle East presented diverse problems to both contestants. For the Italian force in Libya it was, however, a simple matter of flying all types of aircraft across the waist of the Mediterranean from Sicily to Tripoli, an air journey of 300 miles. But Abyssinia and Eritrea were not so easily supplied. There was, in fact, no way of reaching Italian East Africa except by air, a method involving a long cross-desert flight of close on 1,400 miles, counting Cyrenaica as the Libyan starting-point. This tenuous means of reinforcement and communication was not as insecure as it might seem. The risks of interception were very slight indeed in that immense expanse of air, a great portion of which could be traversed during hours of darkness, and the Italians possessed types of long-distance aircraft well able to undertake the journey. Triple-engined machines converted for the purpose of carrying freight were capable of introducing large quantities of stores in the course of successive flights, and troop-carriers could transport personnel. To a certain extent, moreover, the problem of reinforcing fighter strength was similarly solved, for the Fiats and the other types of fighter aircraft, although unable to come in on the wing, could quite easily arrive by air in their component parts. Such a method could not, it is true, renew the losses caused by undue wastage, though it was capable of supplying a steady trickle of reinforcement sufficient to make up for ordinary wear and tear, or for mishaps of a normal sort. But it was wholly insufficient for the purpose of renewing fuel supplies, which were the controlling factor in the case, and the comparative inactivity of the enemy air force in East Africa was undoubtedly dictated by a scarcity of oil and petrol, both of which had been on numerous occasions the main mark of our bomb-raids in that part. It was obvious from the first that Italian East Africa must eventually fall into our hands if Mussolini's Libyan offensive should be lacking in success, and it is typical of the man's egregious self-assurance that he launched his war with that full knowledge at command. The whole of that territory is a beleaguered city open to an unremitting air bombardment from British Middle Eastern bombers, and only a successful invasion of Egypt can, or could, save it from surrender.

Our own problem of air reinforcement was not too simple, apart altogether from the always present danger of supplying it at the expense of lessening the strength of the Metropolitan Air Force, on which depended

the security of Britain. Machines in crate might come in on shipboard under convoy both via the Mediterranean and the long sea route, and that method was useful for building up an air strength locally against a given, and fairly distant, date. It was, however, attended with a certain risk of loss *en route* and it was abominably slow. A better method was devised that could deal, in part, with a sudden situation, and which was safe. Our bomber-aircraft with sufficient air endurance thus came by air to Egypt in a crow-flight out from home, with a rest at Malta on the way. The first hop on this long journey was about 1,200 miles, well within the compass of a variety of British bombers, and the succeeding hop was very considerably less. But this air route was of no benefit to our fighters and to aircraft of medium endurance in the air, which could not therefore escape a sea voyage in any case. It was, however, much shortened for them by the fact that French Equatorial Africa was in the hands of de Gaulle and his Free Frenchmen, and that the Lake Chad Province of that extensive territory had a common boundary with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Such reinforcement could therefore arrive under convoy at a West Coast port and thence fly into Egypt by the backdoor of Darfur, special arrangements being made for landing-stages on the way for refuelling. In this way an aircraft consignment from home might reach its destination in a matter of less than three weeks, to arrive in flying trim after a voyage which, once free of danger in home waters, was unattended with risk.

The Royal Air Force in the Middle East had been, in the manner of sporting parlance, eating their heads off in Palestine and Egypt for nine and a half months, ever since the commencement of the War, during which period their more fortunate comrades in France and Britain had been in it up to the neck. But there had also been a certain interchange of personnel, and the pilots of the Middle East Command were well acquainted with the inner history of all the air fighting that had taken place in Europe, and were able to assess their own prospects of a similar success in terms of what they knew about the "Regia Aeronautica," its aircraft types, its training standards, and the prowess of its airmen. They themselves were not equipped throughout in as up-to-date a manner as the squadrons of Britain's Metropolitan Air Force, flying against the "Luftwaffe." The Gladiator, for instance, was at first the main stem of the fighter force in the Middle East, a type of excellent performance and well armed, it is true, but already on the obsolescent list. It was necessary for the Middle East Command to be thus served with the second

best, for the centre of the battle was far afield in England and a set-back in that air would have disastrous repercussion in all others. Our pilots out there were sure of themselves, and well understood the importance of the part they had to play. The unknown factor was the "Regia Aeronautica," which had been on active service of late in Spain and Abyssinia, had gathered much experience thereby, and was understood to have been recently in large part re-equipped.

From the first moment of hostilities in the new theatre of war it was apparent that the R.A.F. were top-dog in the air. Our bombers bombed intensively and seldom suffered loss by day or night. The Gladiators took on odds and invariably came off best. In fact the situation *vis-à-vis* the "Luftwaffe," over England and her coastal waters, was being duplicated in the Middle East. Neither in airmen nor in aircraft was the Italian Air Force able to compete with the R.A.F. on anything approaching equal terms. Varying reasons were adduced for this agreeable state of things.

First place in such reasoning ought probably to be given to the mediocrity of Italian aircraft, for re-equipment does not necessarily mean a better Air Force if designers are at fault. Her main fighter, the Fiat Cr. 42, although extremely manœuvrable, is neither fast enough nor sufficiently armed. Her bombers, taking as types the multi-engined Caproni Ca. 133 and the Savoia-Marchetti S.M. 79, were clumsy when in flight and sitting birds when British pilots went into attack, besides having distinct limitations of performance. A second reason might have been the over-all lack of first-class training facilities in the days preceding war, lack of thoroughness in those respects being a well-marked trait in Italian national character, and one freely referred to in German military publications. Lastly, it is more than probable that as a whole the "Regia Aeronautica" have not much heart for Mussolini's war, and therefore lack the *élan* without which even the best material and personnel cannot shine in battle.

Results speak for themselves, and in no other way than these suggested reasons can the facts and figures be accounted for. By the end of November the Italians had lost beyond all doubt a total of 290 bombers and fighters, and almost certainly many others in addition, our own loss during the five and a half months' period being no more than 53. During November alone a mixed total of 79 Italian aircraft was definitely destroyed, while the disastrous result to Italy of her air intervention over England, undertaken by Hitler's kind permission, can never be forgotten.

On the first day 13 Italian aircraft were destroyed by British fighters, and on the second, and last, occasion 7 were brought down, neither loss nor damage being suffered by any of our machines. In the Middle East that illusive term, "mastery of the air," was translated into fact by the R.A.F., and this in spite of numerical inferiority, difficulties of reinforcement, and all the other handicaps of an air detachment opposed to the whole air power of a nation in arms. The "Regia Aeronautica" has turned out to be a "lame duck," and the pride of that discovery, although it belongs mostly to the pilots of the R.A.F., must also be shared by the Royal Australian Air Force, the South African Air Force, and some Rhodesian squadrons, all of which contributed the utmost in their power to seize the mastery and maintain it. When, a little later, our ground forces advanced on all fronts, but notably in Libya, the atmosphere thus created was a strong contributory factor to their success.

During the autumn months General Wavell, British Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East, was laying careful plans for an offensive against Libya which was calculated to retrieve the coastal territory from which his forces had previously retired and, if the initial stroke should be successful, to march forward to the conquest of Cyrenaica. At home the War Cabinet had the hardihood and courage to support him with all that could be spared in men, munitions, and material, more especially aircraft, from immediate necessities, and the appearance of Hurricanes in considerable numbers was extremely disconcerting to the Italian Air Force, already suffering from an inferiority complex.

But the sudden opening of hostilities on the Greco-Albanian frontier operated to postpone events. It was necessary to lend aid to the Greeks, and these losses had to be made good before Wavell could move.

When Mussolini occupied Albania on Good Friday of 1939, his aim was to acquire among other considerations a stepping-off place for an attack one day on Greece, eventually on Turkey, and finally on Britain in the Middle East. Libya and Italian East Africa were implicated from the first moment of Mussolini's entry into the War, but Albania was lying fallow, and repaying no interest on investment. Why hesitate when the ground was all prepared? And so, on October 28th, 1940, entirely without pretext and almost without warning, Greece found herself at war with Italy.

The outcome of this new war within a war was of most intimate concern to Britain in the Eastern Mediterranean. Had the Greeks sub-

mitted to invasion, as Italy thought would be the case, or had Greece been conquered out of hand in a short and sharp campaign, the Italian equivalent of a *blitzkrieg*, then the situation would indeed have been precarious. For the backdoor of the Balkans would have then lain open, and the pincer threat on Bulgaria, from north and south, would have been too imminent for that oscillating country to defy her fate. Apart from Turkey's attitude, thus opposed to pressure by the Axis Powers whose armies would be knocking at her European gates, the *Ægean* harbours would be turned into bases for the Italian Fleet, and British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean would have been challenged with some slight prospect of success.

But Greece put up a stern resistance, so successful that she quickly passed to the offensive in her turn, and all the ill-consequences following on Italian victory became by transposition advantages of the very highest order to the British cause. In no sense did it benefit us more than in its effect on the situation in the air, for our offensive purposes. Hitherto we had only been able to strike at Italy in the north by bombers based on England, which must needs be diverted from their night attacks on Germany for the purpose. The objectives chosen for these raiding excursions were pre-eminently of an industrial nature, the partial destruction of which had no immediate or direct effect on the course of hostilities in the Mediterranean theatre. We could strike at Italy's war effort by smashing up the factories of Turin and Milan, but we could not thus attain the naval ports, and centres of fleet concentration, in use against our sea-power in the Mediterranean. This was the one all-important thing, for the Italian Fleet alone stood between a long-drawn campaign in those parts and a swift military success which would restore for all time our situation in the Middle East on land. And now, thanks to the new turn of events in Greece, the lower half of the leg of Italy, and all that it contained, was for the first time within British bomber range.

We lost no time in sending aid to Greece, our assistance naturally taking the form of air support, which could be rendered instantly. British fighters very soon appeared over the lines and immediately made their presence felt amongst the Italian pilots, who already had good reason to dread their onslaught. A bomber base was at once established in Crete for the special purpose of carrying attack to those ports and towns in Southern Italy which had particular importance from a military point of view. Such were Palermo, Messina, and Syracuse in Sicily, and Naples, Metaponto, Bari, Brindisi, Taranto, and Otranto on the Italian mainland.

The average distance of these places from the Cretan base was some 500 miles, and even Rome herself could have been visited if policy had so decided.

The question of bombing the Eternal City was a difficult one. For not only was the capital a world possession, and not Italy's exclusive property, in the sense of its historical importance and monumental interest, but it comprised as well the City of the Vatican, the centre of the Roman Catholic world. At the beginning of the War, Rome had been proclaimed an open town by Mussolini, and we were therefore legally obliged in international law to respect its safety from the air. We have always strictly conformed to the terms of the various Hague Conventions, and on occasion this has been severely to our detriment, especially when our chief enemy persistently committed the most flagrant breaches. But in this matter of sparing the Eternal City all the horrors of air bombardment it is more than possible that it will repay us well. Our moral prestige will be enhanced, and we will stand before the world, including even the parts belonging to our enemies, with hands kept clean of what would be accounted sacrilege in millions of religious eyes, and vandalism in those of non-barbarian people. It is no small thing.

Such, then, were the strategic effects of Mussolini's companion dagger-thrust to the one that fleshed itself in France. It had provided us with bomber bases for the raiding of all the most desirable objectives in Southern Italy ; it had isolated Rhodes and the other islands of the Dodecanese from effective air and sea support ; it had provided us with a European front line which might have great importance later for offensive purposes, and with a brave and ready-landed expeditionary force to man it ; and it had, lastly, enabled us to establish British air power in the Morea and Thessaly, from which areas to lend assistance to the Greek Air Force, not only in the air itself against the "Regia Aeronautica," but also from it in the way of co-operation with the Greek land forces where the battle raged below, and against the Italian Albanian bases, inland and coastal, on which the enemy was pivoting his military strength. If ever a dagger was thrust aside in the perpetration of a dastard blow it was this of Mussolini's when he lightly planned his Grecian conquest, and if ever a man was badly served by his Generals and his Bureau of Intelligence, it was the same disillusioned Duce.

The air operations in the Greco-Italian War followed, in a broad manner of speaking, the usual pattern when a small air power is assailed by one preponderant in numbers. Greece did possess a highly efficient

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Air Force, with excellent material both in regard to air equipment and flying personnel. But it was woefully small and had to be used most sparingly in order that its strength might be conserved. Our prompt reinforcement from the Middle East Command was all the more gratifying on that account, and, although it was insufficient completely to turn the tables in the air, it had the immediate effect of lowering the morale of the Italian pilots, of making them chary of accepting combat, and of sensibly restricting their bombing operations by day.

The Italian bomber units were wont to act in close imitation of their Axis comrades in the air, attacking villages and hamlets at low altitudes over the length and breadth of the country, seeking undefended localities for choice, and on occasion attempting a raid in earnest on the Piræus, Salonika, Corinth, and places of similar importance. They displayed a predilection for Corfu, perhaps as being both near and safe to visit. The town lay completely at their mercy, and utterly without protection for its inhabitants save such as it afforded in the way of shelter from the blast and splinters of exploding high-explosive bombs. The Italian fighter pilots also took a leaf out of the Nazi book in following a Greek or British pilot with machine-gun fire when descending in a parachute. The weather restricted flying on both sides, though more so in the case of the Italians, and the rugged nature of the terrain impeded operations from the air. But this latter condition was a greater handicap to the Italians than to the Allies in the circumstances of this little corner war. Not only was Albania a territory of restricted area in any case, but with the Greek advance it was getting smaller all the time. Its communications were less developed than those of Greece and, in consequence, its population centres were few and far between. This enabled our bombers to concentrate their efforts on the few well-marked places of importance that existed, such as Berat, Elbasan, and the essential ports of Durazzo and Valona, all of which were necessarily crammed with war material and troops, and could be pounded with inevitable success.

The R.A.F. detachment sent to Greece very quickly adapted itself to the sudden change of condition. From the limitless expanse of the plains of Egypt and an air well heated by the sun, they were translated to a high, wild, and mountainous country where winter conditions had begun and would soon prevail. Icing-up became a normal accompaniment of flight, dangerous air-currents were encountered as they flew over the peaked and serrated mountain ranges or in and out of steep-sided valleys beneath the crest lines, and the landing-grounds were often water-

logged. But all these tremendous difficulties were surmounted, and without interruption to the invaluable help they gave our new Ally. Their enthusiasm was undiminished and their success was constant.

This brief account of the Greek-Italian air war may be fittingly brought to a close with a reference to the brilliant exploit of the Fleet Air Arm in the Mediterranean when an attack was delivered on Taranto Harbour, on Armistice Night, November 11th, and half the battle-fleet of Italy was put out of action. It was a blow struck in full support of our Grecian Ally, although not directly related to the Albanian campaign.

The public is only afforded occasional glimpses of the activities of the Fleet Air Arm, which, for the most part, fulfils a Cinderella round of duties calculated for the prevention, rather than the cure, of war's ills. And this is very natural, for the Fleet Air Arm is an integral part of the British Navy, and its operations, as well as the whereabouts of the aircraft-carriers which are its floating bases, must needs be shrouded in the same darkness of secrecy that envelops our ships-of-war. But there was neither necessity nor purpose in concealing the glorious episode of Taranto, following, as it did, the disaster to the "Regia Aeronautica" on the same day, when eight of its bombers and five of its fighters were shot down by Hurricanes over the Thames Estuary in an attack on shipping without loss or damage to our side.

Admiral Cunningham, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, could not bring the Italian Fleet to action, and so he determined to blast them from their sea defences. The aircraft-carriers *Eagle* and *Illustrious*, the former one of the oldest, and the latter the very newest, of these floating aerodromes, conveyed the Skuas and the Swordfish selected to carry out the attack; Taranto, in the gulf of that name, where the main units of the Italian Fleet were lying, being the objective. Our torpedo-carrying and bomber aircraft, eleven of the former and ten loaded with bombs and flares, flew off their decks a long distance from the target area, the better to avoid the possibility of advertising the intention. The moon was bright and it was rightly anticipated that the ground defences would be strong.

In the event one bomber was delayed and came on later, while a second developed a mechanical fault and was unable to take off. They all set off together and made unerringly for their objective and, as the harbour loomed in sight, the Skuas dropped their flares and the Swordfish on their way. These flew down, with full approach altitude to 5,000 feet, and thence in a t

within a few feet of the surface of the water. Nine torpedoes reached their mark under the exultant observation of their air crews, and the remaining two might as easily have done so. But two Swordfish failed to return, and so it must be a matter of conjecture. Those nine, however, did their work full well, for in the matter of a few minutes three Italian battleships were struck and half the capital strength of Italy's navy was out of commission, sunk and badly damaged.

At about the same moment the Skuas bombed the inner harbour and similarly placed *hors de combat* four other ships-of-war, two of which were cruisers. The enemy laid claim to six British aircraft definitely destroyed and three others probably shot down. In fact, however, we lost two Swordfish, though the crew of one reached ground safely and was made prisoner. All anxiety over our naval supremacy in Mediterranean waters was thus removed by one brilliant stroke, while the swift alteration of balance locally reacted on the situation at sea in a universal sense. To conclude this review of the six months period ending on November 30th, some account of the activities at sea will now be given.

From the very first moment of war the enemy had made a dead-set against British merchant shipping, seized with the idea that the infliction of a steadily increasing pressure in that direction must bring us to our knees. Even the so-called "industrial warfare," by which name was characterized the indiscriminate air bombardment of London and provincial cities, was ancillary to that main end, the calculation being that material destruction and reduction of home supplies would necessitate more imports, the tonnage for which would be less and less available as British loss at sea continued. The means at hand for the fulfilment of this perfectly logical process consisted of U-boats, sea-raiders, aircraft, and, latterly, E-boats. They were all efficacious in their several ways, and our shipping suffered heavily, but here we are concerned exclusively with the air as a method of carrying out the design, and of combating it.

In this connexion the enemy announcement of a five-point plan for the air, issued on October 8th, is of exceeding interest. Four of these points dealt with the land attack on Britain from the air, the intention being to annihilate our industries, paralyse our industrial life, demoralize the civil populations, and denude our fighter force. This might be thought a fairly comprehensive programme in itself, but the fifth point, and also the first in order of mention, was an absolute control of the Channel and the English coastal area.

Light is thus thrown on the double assault to which this country was subjected in the late autumn months of 1940, when the night-bombers were committing depredations over the land, and the U-boats, assisted by long-distance aircraft flying from the coast of Brittany, were a peril to our convoys on the Atlantic approaches to these shores. They acted in a close co-operation by means of wireless inter-communication, and thus increased the hazards of the voyages, the aircraft scouting for the U-boats and the latter coming to their call.

Nothing less than this was to be expected with the whole of the French coast in German hands. Our trade with Scandinavia and the Baltic had died away to nothing after Hitler's victories in the north, and there was no North Sea traffic whatever except in coastal waters. All our tonnage, therefore, in whatever part of the world the sailing-ports were situated, had perforce to make a western approach towards the British Isles, and it was inevitable that these various streams of shipping should converge, sooner or later, at a point in the Atlantic Ocean prior to a dispersal to the several west-coast ports. It was in this area, some 500 miles out to sea, that the enemy attack was staged, a rich netting-ground for the combined exertions of the U-boat and the aircraft spotting for it. In the last War the Mediterranean was the grave of British shipping, but in this it will be that part of the Atlantic Ocean lying, roughly, between Cape Finisterre in Spain and Cape Clear in the south of Ireland.

The strain of counteracting these activities lay heavy on the British Navy, but it was shared by the aircraft of the Coastal Command, which had been incessantly employed since the beginning of the War on similar duty over the waters of the North Sea. Their work is mostly of a preventive nature, and lack of the spectacular in what they do has largely concealed from the public its immense variety and usefulness. Up to the end of November 1940 aircraft of the Coastal Command have escorted well over 4,000 separate convoys, entailing about 16,000 individual flights by seaplanes, flying-boats, and land-planes. An average of 5,300 hours has thus been flown each month on convoy duty, and further figures of 1,500 and 3,200 must be added to the total to account for time spent monthly on anti-submarine work of a special nature, and plain reconnaissance. In the course of all this flying, about 250 submarines have been sighted and some 160 deliberate attacks have been delivered, a large proportion of which have been successful. The Coastal Command aircraft lay mines regularly in estuaries and ports belonging to the enemy and enemy-occupied territory, carry out bomb attacks on the same objectives.

and have been particularly active in the bombardment from the air of such submarine bases as Lorient, Bordeaux, and Brest, where the German and Italian underwater craft harbour which are employed in the Atlantic. Lastly, they have successfully developed a torpedo offensive against enemy shipping as it plies inshore along the coast of Western Europe, tens of thousands of tons having been sunk in that way.

The strength of the Coastal Command has been steadily augmented, with new units formed, obsolescent types of aircraft displaced by modern machines, and increased training facilities for the extra personnel. Many P.B.Y. long-range flying-boats are on order from the U.S.A., and as units are re-equipped with these useful types, so will the radius of action of the Coastal Command aircraft be extended.

As soon as the western approaches of the Atlantic became the focal point for attack on British convoys a great part of the energy of the Coastal Command was directed to that area of ocean, and this necessarily brought it into a close association with the Navy operating in those waters. Both Services were under a woeful handicap owing to the neutrality of Eire and the consequent inability to make use of the Irish ports, a deprivation that was of such decided benefit to the enemy, and the situation demanded an even closer co-operation between the two. Hence there arose in various quarters a suggestion that the Coastal Command, in view of the emergency, should come under the Admiralty much in the same way as the Fleet Air Arm. The demand, however, was silenced when the Prime Minister said that he saw no present need for any change, adding in explanation that the operational policy was actually determined by the Admiralty in view of the functions of the squadrons of the Coastal Command, and that the relations between the two Services were excellent.

The crucial question of air versus sea power had not been further tested out as November drew to a close, though on a plane of tactics there was plenty of evidence that aircraft could not attack ships-of-war and armed merchant vessels with impunity. Figures which have been compiled up to the beginning of December, showing the casualties inflicted on enemy aircraft by the anti-aircraft guns of the British and Allied Navies and by defensively armed merchant ships, give a gratifying result. In the course of these attacks from the air, during the period named, 192 enemy bombers were shot down and their destruction was confirmed, 91 were more than probably destroyed, and a further 100 visibly suffered damage, making a round total of 383, of which rather more than

75 per cent. were accountable to the British Navy and auxiliary warships. In addition the Fleet Air Arm accounted for 111 in similar categories, thus bringing the grand total of enemy aircraft destroyed or damaged while attacking ships at sea to a practical 500.

But this only touched the fringe of the question as it might affect naval strategy, besides which there was a certain amount of enemy success (though not much) in sinkings and material damage to set against his losses. The enemy had often boasted that air power was supreme at sea if enough of it could be brought to bear, and in the special circumstances of the Norwegian invasion it would appear that their case was proved. For here, it will be remembered, the whole might of the British Navy, in huge preponderance over the German Fleet, was insufficient for the domination of the Skager Rak, only a hundred miles in width, so that the enemy's sea communications with Oslo might be severed and his transports prevented getting across. It was the enemy's immense local air superiority which constrained us from utilizing our sea-power in such a way. A standing patrol of surface ships-of-war would have been necessary, and this could not be furnished by destroyers. It was too near the German sea-bases harbouring their cruisers and battleships for destroyers to have been effective, and any patrol of ours must in consequence be composed of larger and better armoured men-of-war. But these would then have been assailed from the air by bomber concentrations, and could not have but suffered serious losses, so considerable in fact that in no long time our Navy might have undergone disaster. This afforded irrefutable proof of air dominance over ships-of-war when the sources of air power are near at hand, and went that far to settle a much-debated question. For the first time British naval strategy had been seriously affected, if not controlled, by enemy air power ; a new situation had arisen which gave much food for thought.

In the Mediterranean, as soon as Italy ranged herself against us, there existed a somewhat analogous position ; for where that sea is gathered at the waist in the channel called the Sicilian Narrows its breadth is but a hundred miles from shore to shore, while the passage of these straits by British merchantmen and men-of-war on escort duty was a sheer necessity for the purpose of replenishing our forces in the Middle East. There was speculation as to whether the situation in the Skager Rak might not repeat itself. Italian air bases were adjacent in Sicily, where there are several military aerodromes, while the small island of Pantellaria, strongly fortified and with an airfield of its own, stood midway

in the channel like a stake that bars a narrow thoroughfare to all except pedestrian traffic. It is true that the "Regia Aeronautica" has no dive-bomber for attack on ships such as the Nazi Junkers 87, and that the *picciatelli* about which they boast is the Savoia Marchetti Sm. 86 entirely made of wood. But the Italians possess ordinary bombers in plenty, and more than enough to make the passage of the Narrows a risky undertaking for our ships if their pilots were determined and did not shirk the danger. . . .

In the event, however, it was quickly apparent that our Mediterranean enemy was letting the golden opportunity slip by, exhibiting no more enterprise over water than above the land, and making no use whatever of his highly favourable situation as the air power on the spot. It had never been expected that Italy would prove as redoubtable an opponent on land, sea, or in the air as Germany. The quiescence of the Italian Navy in Mediterranean waters was understandable, in spite of its superiority in size and numbers compared to the British Fleet. The hesitation of her Army to make good the boast of its Commander and proceed to conquer Egypt could be appreciated. In the one case the traditional fighting power of our ships-of-war was exercising a mesmeric influence, while in the other the immense natural difficulties of an inhospitable terrain had first to be surmounted. But the air was a domain of another sort, wherein there was complete freedom at any time to fly and fight, and in which every local advantage was on the side of Italy. The inability of the "Regia Aeronautica" to rule the sea between Cape Bon off Tunis and Sicily, with Pantellaria in the middle of the strait still further to circumscribe the passage, was a plain admission of inferiority without parallel in the circumstances of the case.

On that note this short review of the War in the Air for the period commencing on June 1st and ending on November 30th, 1940, can be brought to a close. In a sense it was a dragging period, a time of preparation and indecisive struggle. The air battle of Britain had ended in our favour and the daylight attacks in force of the "Luftwaffe" had been repulsed with heavy loss. But the Nazi night-bombers still ravaged our towns and cities, just as ours, on a lesser scale though to greater purpose, ravaged those of Germany. On either side the sea and air blockade was steadily maintained, although free access to the Atlantic from the west coast of France had increased the stringency of German measures to render hers effective. Italy's intervention in the

War had not sensibly increased our danger, and had not, to all appearance, overstrained our resources. She was palpably a drain on her Axis partner, and soon might become an actual liability. In every well-contested tug-of-war there comes a period, following on initial success in gaining ground, when there is neither give nor take, although both teams are straining with all their might. The end of our six-months period might be likened to such a state. And as with the tussle between two teams, so with the sterner game of war, one side first betrays distress and then collapses. In the days forthcoming the strain will reach a breaking-point, but we will still be pulling hard when our enemies first show themselves pulled out.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE DIPLOMATIC WAR

BY W. HORSFALL CARTER

THE period under review is marked negatively by the collapse of the balance-of-power system, whereby Europe's affairs had been regulated for more than three centuries, positively by Hitler's endeavour to establish European "unity" under German direction and eliminate British influence once and for all from the Continent of Europe.

The Nazi notion of a "new order" was plausible enough, since, unquestionably, the old political world had perished under the stress of inter-State anarchy; but, so long as the strategic bridge which linked England with the Continent remained intact, it was possible to imagine that the combination of the Anglo-French democracies which lost the peace of 1919 would be given a second chance. When the barrier of the Low Countries was smashed by Hitler's juggernaut war-machine on May 10th, however—as M. Baudouin, French Foreign Minister, said in a broadcast—"a world died and now a new world must be born."

Only, the events of these six months have shown that Europe is not the world. As the war itself took on new dimensions, and aggression cast its shadow over three continents, the saving grace of Britain's sea power came to be seen in true and dominating perspective. Thus, though Hitler's "revolutionary" genius and German military competence brought his country on to a pinnacle of power exceeding all anticipations, from the moment that oceanic factors and Britain's remarkable adaptability to the new element of aerial warfare came into play, the colossus was shown to have feet of clay. Hitler stood revealed as at once the conqueror and prisoner of Europe.

The whole world could see—and applaud—the check administered to the Axis Powers' schemes of domination by the Royal Air Force. The much-trumpeted invasion of Britain was continually postponed—perhaps *sine die*. Yet the Nazis contrived to maintain their ascendancy in what may be called psychological warfare—which is something broader and

more compelling than mere "propaganda." Consequently, we shall find that, for most of the period from June 1st to November 30th, it is German diplomacy which is still making the running, while Mr. Churchill holds to the view that "deeds and not words" will alone convince the subject-peoples and the non-belligerent nations of Britain's capacity to survive—and ultimately, but only after years of struggle, to win.

German skill and ingenuity in wielding this "Fifth Arm"<sup>1</sup> was never better demonstrated than in the moral disintegration which led to the military surrender of France. Following the defection of King Leopold and the bulk of the Belgian Army under his command on May 27th, the military situation looked black for the Allies. Mr. Churchill, in his statement to the House of Commons on June 4th on the Flanders campaign, did not mince words, but spoke frankly of a colossal military disaster as "the German eruption swept like a sharp scythe around the right and rear of the Armies of the north"; and even when giving thanks for the "miracle of deliverance" of the evacuation of the B.E.F. from Dunkirk, he was careful to deprecate any illusory optimism. Yet there was no question of giving up. Both Mr. Churchill and M. Reynaud made brave utterances after the Belgian surrender, and it became known that the Belgian Government, under MM. Pierlot and Spaak, dissociating themselves from their Sovereign's action, were disposed to carry on the war from France. The Supreme War Council met in Paris on May 31st and published a communiqué reiterating the Allies' will to victory. On June 5th M. Reynaud reconstituted his Cabinet, himself taking over Foreign Affairs from M. Daladier and introducing M. Baudouin, a prominent figure in the banking world, but who was new to politics, as his Under-Secretary. Colonel de Gaulle, the man who had forecast precisely that use of tanks and aircraft to which Germany owed her success in the recent break-through on the Western Front, was promoted and called in to be Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Defence. And on June 7th a tripartite agreement was duly signed in London, whereby Belgium was formally included in the monetary and financial partnership established on December 4th, 1939.

Blow followed on blow, however, in the field, and French military leadership appeared paralysed by its obsession with defensive strategy—the so-called "Maginot mind." Once again Hitler gave a masterly exhibition of his two-pronged political strategy directed to splitting the Anglo-French alliance, as he threatened the French with a devastating

<sup>1</sup> *The Fifth Arm* (Constable), by H. Wickham Steed.

## THE DIPLOMATIC WAR

air attack on Paris and, simultaneously, the British with an assault on London and the English Channel ports. Each nation, naturally, was concerned first with its own safety. Moreover, in forcing the B.E.F. to re-embark at Dunkirk, Hitler had already prepared the way for the peace party to make out that France had been abandoned by her ally at a vital moment of the battle. In fact, M. Reynaud and his colleagues knew perfectly well that Britain had prepared a new expeditionary force which was on its way at the very moment when, on June 13th, yielding to overwhelming pressure, the Government left Paris to the invaders, declaring it an open city. Finally, choosing his moment when France's situation was well-nigh desperate, Signor Mussolini, on June 10th, gave notice of Italy's declaration of war.

That same day M. Reynaud had also addressed a moving appeal for armament supplies to President Roosevelt, maintaining his policy of "no surrender." "We shall fight before Paris, fight behind Paris, shut ourselves up in one of our provinces, and if they drive us out, go to North Africa, and, if need be, to our American possessions." After Italy's stab in the back M. Reynaud sent a further, still more urgent, appeal (June 13th).

But it was too late. All that the American President could do was to proclaim to the housetops his country's unswerving support for the nations, Britain and France, which were defending the institutions of democracy. His address to the University of Virginia on June 10th was notable for its scathing reference to "the hand that held the dagger" and "struck it into the back of its neighbour," and its revelation that the U.S. Administration had more than once offered to serve as go-between for negotiations that might have preserved peace in the Mediterranean areas and secured in due time "the construction of a more liberal international economic system which would assure to all Powers equality of opportunity in the world's markets and in the securing of raw materials on equal terms."

M. Reynaud had reckoned without the defeatism which had for some time been sapping, not only the French political world, but also the highest military circles. Marshal Pétain and General Weygand lent the weight of their authority and prestige to the view held by several members of the Cabinet that any further resistance to the German onslaught was useless, and that the only course open now was to surrender on terms. The Cabinet, which had by now fled to Bordeaux, met three times on June 15th. Between the second and third meetings it had received a

communication from London which was one of the most remarkable in the annals of diplomacy. Following a visit by Mr. Churchill, Mr. Eden, and General Dill on June 12th, which produced yet another assurance of British solidarity in these terms :

“ We renew to the French Republic our pledge and resolve to continue the struggle at all costs in France, in this land, upon the oceans, and in the air wherever it may lead us, using all our resources to the utmost limit and sharing together the burden of repairing the ravages of war. We shall never turn from the conflict until France stands safe and erect in all her grandeur, until the wronged and enslaved States and peoples have been liberated, and until civilization is free from the nightmare of Nazism. . . . ”

M. Reynaud was authorized to transmit to his colleagues an offer on the part of the British Government to conclude a solemn Act of Union between the two countries.

The terms of this twelfth-hour Declaration, going beyond the wildest dreams of most of the champions of a “ federal union ” after the war, were as follows :

“ At this most fateful moment in the history of the modern world, the Governments of the United Kingdom and the French Republic make this declaration of indissoluble union and unyielding resolution in their common defence of justice and freedom against subjection to a system which reduces mankind to a life of robots and slaves.

“ The two Governments declare that France and Great Britain shall no longer be two, but one Franco-British Union. The Constitution of the Union will provide for joint organs of defence, foreign, financial, and economic policies. Every citizen of France will enjoy immediately citizenship of Great Britain. Every British subject will become a citizen of France.

“ Both countries will share responsibility for the repair of the devastation of war wherever it occurs in their territories, and the resources of both shall be equally and as one applied to that purpose.

“ During the war there shall be a single War Cabinet, and all the forces of Britain and France, whether on land, sea, or in the air will be placed under its direction. It will govern from wherever it best can. The two Parliaments will be formally associated.

“ The nations of the British Empire are already forming new armies. France will keep her available forces in the field, on the sea, and in the air.

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"The Union appeals to the United States to fortify the economic resources of the Allies and to bring her powerful material aid to the common cause. The Union will concentrate its whole energy against the power of the enemy, no matter where the battle may be, and thus we shall conquer."

Brave words, indeed! But not at all attuned to the mood of the moment in France. Anglo-French relations were destined to remain, as continually during the previous twenty years, "out of phase" right up to the bitter end. The French Cabinet decided, by 14 votes to 10, against accepting the British offer—and then resigned, making way for a Government of capitulation under Marshal Pétain. His broadcast statement—"I have applied to our opponent to ask him if he is ready to sign with us, *as between soldiers* after the fight and *in honour*, a means to put an end to hostilities"—revealed a man wholly out of touch with present-day realities of gangster-rule. A similar statement by M. Baudouin, the new Foreign Minister, gave assurances that "the country would never be ready to accept shameful conditions which would mean the end of spiritual freedom for her people. . . ."—assurances which, within a matter of days, were sadly belied. On June 21st four French plenipotentiaries were received at Compiègne by Herr Hitler in the identical railway coach in which Marshal Foch had handed the armistice terms to the German representatives in 1918. The Führer was resolved to taste the sweets of melodramatic revenge. Nevertheless, in the Preamble to the armistice terms with which the French delegates were now confronted, a show of magnanimity was made, the object being, it was stated, only (1) to prevent a resumption of hostilities; (2) to provide safeguards for the continuation of the war forced upon Germany by Britain; and (3) to create the necessary conditions for a new peace, the basic element of which should be reparation of the injustice committed by force against the Reich.

The following summary of the terms presented and accepted was published by the British Ministry of Information on June 23rd :

## I

Immediate cessation of hostilities. French troops already surrounded to lay down arms.

## II

For security of German interests territory north and west of following line to be occupied : Geneva-Dôle, Châlon-sur-Saône,

Paray le Monial, Moulins, Bourges, Vierzon, thence to 20 kilometres east of Tours, thence south parallel to Angoulême railway to Mont de Marsan and St. Jean de Pied de Port. The areas not yet occupied in this territory to be occupied immediately on conclusion of the present convention.

### III

In occupied area Germany to have all rights of occupying Power, excluding local administration, the French Government to afford all necessary facilities. Germany will reduce to a minimum occupation of Western coast after cessation of hostilities with Great Britain. The French Government to be free to choose for itself the seat of Government in non-occupied territory or even to transfer it to Paris if desired. In the latter event Germany will allow the necessary facilities for administration from Paris of both occupied and unoccupied territory.

### IV

French naval, military, and air forces to be demobilized and disarmed within a period to be decided, with the exception of troops necessary for maintaining order. Size and armament of the latter to be decided by Germany and Italy respectively. French armed forces in occupied territory to be brought back into unoccupied territory and demobilized. These troops will previously have laid down their arms and material at places where they are at the moment of the armistice.

### V

As a guarantee Germany may demand surrender in good condition of all artillery, tanks, anti-tank weapons, Service aircraft, infantry armament, tractors and munitions in territory not to be occupied. Germany will decide the extent of these deliveries.

### VI

All arms and war material remaining in unoccupied territory which are not left for the use of French authorized forces to be put in store under German or Italian control. Manufacture of new war material in non-occupied territory to stop immediately.

### VII

Land and coast defences with armaments, etc., in occupied territory to be handed over in good condition. All plans of fortifications, particulars of mines, barrages, etc., to be handed over.

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## VIII

French fleet, except that part left free for safeguard of French interests in the Colonial Empire, shall be collected in ports to be specified, demobilized, and disarmed under German or Italian control. German Government solemnly declares that it has no intention of using for its own purposes during the war the French fleet stationed in ports under German control except those units necessary for coast surveillance and mine-sweeping. Except for that part—to be determined—of the fleet destined for protection of colonial interests all ships outside French territorial waters must be recalled to France.

## IX

All information about naval mines and defences to be furnished. Mine-sweeping to be carried on by the French forces.

## X

The French Government not to undertake any hostile action with remaining armed forces. Members of the French forces to be prevented from leaving French soil. No material to be conveyed to Great Britain. No Frenchman to serve against Germany in the service of other Powers.

## XI

No French merchant shipping to leave harbour. Resumption of commercial traffic subject to previous authorization of German and Italian Governments. Merchant ships outside France to be recalled or, if that is not possible, to go to neutral ports.

## XII

No French aircraft to leave the ground. Aerodromes to be placed under German or Italian control. All foreign aircraft in unoccupied territory to be handed over to the German authorities.

## XIII

All establishments and military tools and stocks in occupied territory to be handed over intact. Ports, permanent fortifications, naval building yards to be left in their present state and not destroyed or damaged. The same to apply to all means of communication, particularly railways, roads, canals, telephones, telegraphs, navigational and coast lighting marks. Material for repairs to be made available.

## XIV

All wireless transmitting stations in French territory to stop.

## XV

The French Government to facilitate transport of merchandise between Germany and Italy across unoccupied territory.

## XVI

The French Government to repatriate the population to occupied territory.

## XVII

The French Government to prevent transfer of valuables and stocks from occupied to non-occupied territory or abroad.

## XVIII

The cost of the maintenance of German occupying troops to be paid by France.

## XIX

All German prisoners of war to be released. The French Government to hand over all German subjects indicated by the German Government who are in France or French overseas territory.

## XX

All French prisoners of war in German hands to remain so until the conclusion of peace.

## XXI

Provision for the safeguarding of materials handed over.

## XXII

The German Armistice Commission will carry out the armistice and will also co-ordinate it with the Franco-Italian armistice.

## XXIII

The armistice will enter into force as soon as the French Government have concluded a similar agreement with the Italian Government. Cessation of hostilities six hours after the Italian Government notify its conclusion. The German Government will announce this by wireless.

## XXIV

The present armistice to be valid until the conclusion of a peace treaty and can be denounced at any moment if the French Government do not fulfil their obligations.

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As soon as it was known that these terms had been accepted by the Pétain Government, the British Prime Minister issued a strong statement in the following terms :

" His Majesty's Government have heard with grief and amazement that the terms dictated by the Germans have been accepted by the French Government at Bordeaux. They cannot feel that such or similar terms could have been submitted to by any French Government which possessed freedom, independence, and constitutional authority. Such terms, if accepted by all Frenchmen, would place not only France but the French Empire entirely at the mercy and in the power of the German and Italian dictators.

" Not only would the French people be held down and forced to work against their Ally, not only would the soil of France be used, with the approval of the Bordeaux Government, as the means of attacking their Ally, but the whole resources of the French Empire and of the French Navy would speedily pass into the hands of the adversary for the fulfilment of his purpose.

" His Majesty's Government firmly believe that whatever happens they will be able to carry the war, wherever it may lead, on the seas, in the air, and upon land, to a successful conclusion. When Great Britain is victorious she will, in spite of the action of the Bordeaux Government, cherish the cause of the French people, and a British victory is the only possible hope for the restoration of the greatness of France and the freedom of its people.

" Brave men from other countries overrun by Nazi invasion are steadfastly fighting in the ranks of freedom. Accordingly, His Majesty's Government call upon all Frenchmen outside the power of the enemy to aid them in their task and thereby render its accomplishment more sure and more swift. They appeal to all Frenchmen, wherever they may be, to aid to the utmost of their strength the forces of liberation, which are enormous, and which, faithfully and resolutely used, will assuredly prevail."

In this appeal to all Frenchmen outside the power of the enemy Mr. Churchill was endorsing the summons to continue the fight sent out from London by General de Gaulle. The latter had made his way to England to raise the standard of *Free France*, and to serve as a rallying-point for all Frenchmen who realized that the only future for their country under the German heel was one of slavery.

The armistice terms imposed by Italy, taking her share of the Axis victory, though she had done no fighting, were announced on June 26th. They did not include, as had been anticipated, formal demands for

territory—such as France's North African Empire, Syria, and French Somaliland—but, no doubt at Hitler's bidding, postponed the question of dividing the spoils until Germany's victory over Britain, which was scheduled to be completed during the summer. The text of the terms was as follows :

### TERMS OF FRANCO-ITALIAN ARMISTICE

#### I

France will stop the fighting in France, French North Africa, the colonies, the mandated territories, and in the air and on the sea. (As in German armistice.)

#### II

For the duration of the armistice the Italian troops will stand on their advanced lines in all theatres of operations.

#### III

In French Metropolitan territory a zone situated between the advanced Italian lines and a line drawn 50 kilometres (30 miles) as the crow flies beyond the Italian lines proper shall be demilitarized for the duration of the armistice.

In Tunis the militarized zone on the present Libyan-Tunisian frontier shall be demilitarized.

In Algeria and in French African territories south of Algeria which border on Libya a zone 200 kilometres wide (about 120 miles) adjoining the Libyan frontier shall be demilitarized.

For the duration of hostilities between Italy and the British Empire and for the duration of the armistice the French Somaliland coast shall be entirely demilitarized.

Italy shall have full and constant right to use the port of Jibuti with all its equipment, together with the French section of the Jibuti-Addis Ababa railway for all kinds of transport.

#### IV

The zones to be demilitarized shall be evacuated by French troops within ten days after the cessation of hostilities, except only for the personnel strictly necessary for the supervision and maintenance of fortification works, barracks, arms depots, and military buildings, and the troops required to maintain order in the interior as shall be determined later by the Italian Armistice Commission. Fixed armaments in fortification works and the accompanying ammunition must in the period be rendered useless.

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In the coastal territory of French Somaliland all movable arms and ammunition shall be laid down within fifteen days.

## V

Under full reserve of the right mentioned in article X all arms, supplies, and ammunition in the zones to be demilitarized in French Metropolitan territory and territory adjoining Libya, together with the arms surrendered to the troops effecting the evacuation of the territories concerned, must be removed within fifteen days.

## VI, VII, and VIII

So long as hostilities continue between Italy and the British Empire, the maritime military fortified areas and naval bases of Toulon, Bizerta, Ajaccio, and Oran shall be demilitarized until the cessation of hostilities against the British Empire. This demilitarization to be achieved within fifteen days.

## IX

Provides for demobilizing and disarming of land, sea, and air forces in France. (As in German armistice.)

So far as the territories of French North Africa, Syria, and the coast of French Somaliland are concerned, the Italian Armistice Commission will take into account in fixing the procedure for demobilization and disarmament the particular importance of maintaining order in those territories.

## X

Italy reserves the right as a guarantee of the execution of the armistice convention to demand the surrender in whole or in part of the collective arms of the infantry and artillery, armoured cars, tanks, motor vehicles and horse vehicles, together with ammunition belonging to units who have been engaged or have been facing Italian forces.

## XI

This article is concerned with Italian or German control of arms, munitions, and war material in non-occupied French territories and the immediate cessation of the production of war material in the same territories.

## XII

This article provides for the recall to French ports, demobilizing and disarming of the French fleet (as in German armistice). The Italian Government declares, as does the German Government,

that it has no intention of claiming the French fleet on the conclusion of peace.

### XIII

The French authorities shall render harmless within ten days all mines in the maritime military areas and naval bases which are to be demilitarized.

### XIV and XV

These provide that the French Government shall not continue hostilities in any form anywhere, shall prevent French citizens from leaving French territory to take part in hostilities, and shall prevent war material from being sent to Britain or other countries. (As in German armistice.)

### XVI and XVII

These articles forbid French merchant ships to leave port for the present and order the recall to French ports or the sending to neutral ports of French cargo-boats not in French ports or in ports under French control. Seized Italian cargo-boats and Italian merchandise or merchandise consigned to Italy which has been seized from non-Italian ships is to be restored. (As in German armistice.)

### XVIII

Forbids any aeroplane to leave French territory, and places under Italian or German control all airports, together with their equipment, in the same territories. (As in German armistice.)

### XIX

Prohibits wireless transmission from French Metropolitan territory (as in German armistice). Conditions for wireless communication between France and North Africa, Syria, and French Somaliland are to be determined by the Italian Armistice Commission.

### XX

Goods shall be freely transported between Germany and Italy through non-occupied French territories. (As in German armistice.)

### XXI

All Italian prisoners of war and Italian civilians who have been interned or arrested and sentenced for political reasons or on account of the war shall be immediately handed over to the Italian Government.

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## XXII, XXIII, XXIV, and XXV

These provide for the safeguarding of material handed over, the setting up of an Italian armistice convention, and procedure for enforcing the armistice. (As in German armistice.)

## XXVI

The convention shall remain in force until the conclusion of a peace treaty, but may be denounced by Italy at any time if the French Government does not fulfil its undertakings. (As in German armistice.)

(On July 7th the Vichy Government announced that Italy, of her own accord, had mitigated the armistice terms regarding the French Fleet and Air Force. A French request had, in fact, crossed a telegram from the Armistice Commission at Turin to the effect that France was to be allowed the temporary non-application of certain terms. Thus Toulon, Bizerta, Ajaccio, Oran, and Mers-el-Kebir might remain armed until further notice instead of being at once demilitarized.)

Mr. Churchill's statement evoked a petulant *riposte* from Marshal Pétain: "Mr. Churchill fears that the fate that has fallen upon our country during the past month may overtake his own. Mr. Churchill is a good judge of the interest of his country, but not of ours, and still less of French honour. . . ." It was the first salvo in an unedifying series of recriminations. On June 24th M. Prouvost, the High Commissioner for Propaganda in the Pétain Government, made a statement to American newspaper correspondents at Bordeaux in which he appeared to endorse the popular criticism that British military assistance had been inadequate and at the same time suggested that the contingency of independent action by France in asking for an armistice (despite the solemn undertaking issued by the Supreme War Council on March 28th), had been envisaged and accepted by Britain. An authoritative statement was promptly issued in London declaring that M. Prouvost's statement was inaccurate throughout. By this time Anglo-French relations were distinctly strained. There followed the British Government's decision on June 28th to recognize General de Gaulle as "leader of all free Frenchmen, wherever they may be, who rally to him in support of the Allied cause," and then, on July 3rd units of the British Fleet took action at Mers-el-Kebir, the maritime port of Oran, to ensure that the big vessels of the French Fleet should not be available for use by Germany and Italy. A daring raid was also made on the new battleship, the *Richelieu*, in the

harbour at Dakar, West Africa. Two days later it was officially announced at Vichy, the new seat of the French Government, that diplomatic relations with Great Britain were broken off. It was also stated that all Frenchmen serving with the British forces would be liable to penalties ranging from hard labour to death.

In a statement to Parliament on June 25th Mr. Churchill gave the answer to many of the reproaches now levelled at Great Britain by the Government of "captive" France. He explained that the British Cabinet had been unable to agree to a request, transmitted by M. Reynaud on June 16th, asking for the release of France from her obligations under the Anglo-French Agreement, but had intimated that British consent might be forthcoming on condition that the French Fleet was dispatched to British ports and remained there while negotiations were taking place. The advent of the Pétain Government, formed for the express purpose of seeking an armistice with Germany, had closed the question, though many solemn assurances were given that the Fleet would never be allowed to fall into German hands. Article 8 of the Armistice terms, however, was definite enough—providing that the French Fleet, except that part left free for the safeguarding of French interests in the Colonial Empire, should be collected in ports to be specified and there demobilized and disarmed under German or Italian control. Little value could be attached to the German Government's solemn undertaking that it would not use the vessels for any purpose during the war.

In a subsequent statement on July 4th, justifying the Admiralty's drastic action in taking the greater part of the French Fleet under British control—with the use of force, if necessary—the Prime Minister declared that the Vichy Government's action in subscribing to Article 8 of the Armistice terms "might have been a mortal injury"; another instance of *actual* damage to the British cause was the handing over (despite a personal promise from M. Reynaud) to Germany of the 400 German air pilots who were prisoners of war in France. At the conclusion of the speech Mr. Churchill made it perfectly clear that there was no question of Britain "throwing up the sponge" and seeking negotiation with the German and Italian Governments, as was being rumoured through assiduous German propaganda in the United States.

Conceivably Hitler really thought at this time that Britain would knuckle under, now that France was down and out. The shadow of invasion by sea and air, and Germany's immense victorious Army on the

Continent, constituted indeed a formidable threat. In an interview given to the American newspaper correspondent, Karl von Wiegand, which was published on June 13th, Hitler was at pains to deny that he wanted to smash up the British Empire ; all he sought to do was "to take over the former German colonies, to destroy the English capitalistic clique, and end the British hegemony at sea." Nothing was further from his thoughts, he added, than German interference in the Western Hemisphere. It was just that great nations had certain vital requirements which, when satisfied, would lead to a real peace instead of the wicked Versailles Treaty !

President Roosevelt was in no mood to listen to protestations of this kind. All possible help in the way of material supplies had been sent to France, so long as M. Reynaud was at the helm. On June 17th the Senate approved by a unanimous vote legislation to the effect that the United States would not acquiesce in the transfer of possessions in the Western Hemisphere from one non-American Power to another, and the decision was duly communicated to the European Powers. The British Purchasing Commission was doing big business all the time ; and sundry surplus military and naval equipment was released for sale to England as a contribution to meeting the grave situation consequent upon the defection of France. Appropriations for United States Defence needs were also substantially increased.

Public opinion in America during this period was undergoing a remarkable change. It supported the President in all the new measures taken in the interests of American security—"to defend America by aiding the Allies,"<sup>1</sup> and was disposed to endorse the warning words of the British Ambassador, Lord Lothian, in an address to Yale University on June 19th, that "if Hitler gets our Fleet or destroys it, the whole foundation on which the security of both our countries has rested for years will have disappeared." Here, indeed, was a tremendous new factor—which was to do much to upset Hitler's plans : that for the first time the full implications of British sea power were being widely appreciated by the people of the United States. The lesson that America must ensure the security of her Atlantic seaboard to the British Navy was being learnt. A logical development from this new consciousness of danger was the series of plans for co-ordinating the defence arrangements of the Western Hemisphere which were implemented in the following months ;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Committee adopting this title, under the chairmanship of Mr. William Allen White, Kansas City.

the permanent U.S.A.-Canadian Defence Board, the arrangement with Britain for the leasing of bases in the Caribbean, the discussions, with an Australian representative in attendance, for joint Anglo-American defence of the Pacific, and finally, the projects tabled at the Havana Conference with the Central and South American States in the last days of July for joint action, in the spheres of defence and economic consolidation. Nevertheless, the weakening of the isolationist tradition had still not gone far enough for the British Government to take any undue risks.

Japan was tempted to take advantage of Britain's precarious position, after the French collapse, to secure for herself some pickings in the Far East. French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies, two rich territories on which Japanese nationalists had long cast covetous eyes, were now almost at the mercy of the lords of Asia—who could afford to turn aside from the unprofitable and interminable struggle with China. All the Chinese ports were subject to a Japanese blockade, and it would not take long to complete the ring round Hong-Kong. Yet Chinese resistance showed no signs of weakening, and there was still a steady trickle of supplies from the U.S.A. and Soviet Russia by the only route available—the so-called Burma Road—a triumph of Chinese engineering skill.

Japan duly seized her opportunity. On June 4th her Government requested Britain to stop the transit of war material through Burma to China. The British Government, harried on every side, saw no alternative but to accede to the request, and an Agreement was duly signed on July 17th whereby the passage of arms and ammunition, petrol, lorries, and railway material along that route was prohibited for an experimental period of three months. This further gesture of "appeasement" provoked consternation in Chinese Government circles and was widely disapproved in England and the United States. The Government excused itself somewhat lamely by pointing out that British traffic in war material for the Far East had in fact dwindled to nothing since the outbreak of the war in Europe, and that Russian and American supplies would, in any case, during the three months of heavy rains then beginning, be on a very small scale. Mr. Churchill, in his statement to Parliament on July 18th, put the best face possible on this "lead from weakness" by emphasizing that British consent had been made conditional on the Japanese undertaking to achieve, during the three months' period, by negotiations with the Government of China, a "solution just and equit-

able to both parties to the dispute, and freely accepted by them both." This diplomatic language thinly concealed the policy of polite blackmail to which Britain was being subjected, but, as Mr. Churchill said—and this was the British Government's real justification—the great thing was to gain time. The only immediate result, as with other appeasement expedients, was to accentuate Japanese arrogance. Prince Konoye, the new Prime Minister—succeeding Admiral Yonai—came out at once with a statement that his Cabinet had been discussing the strengthening of the Axis compact with Germany and Italy (the anti-Komintern pact).

The meaning of this British concession to *force majeure* was not lost upon people in the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Spokesmen of the latter Power were at pains to point out that Russia was not consulted on the Burma Road decision—the Foreign Office had done no more than acquaint M. Maisky with the Government's decision. In certain quarters this was interpreted as a further instance of cold-shouldering, specially regrettable as the course of the war had been bringing Russian and British interests very much into line with one another. On the other hand, Soviet Russia had herself given the example of extreme "realism" in foreign policy and was now the supreme exponent of the technique of "appeasement."

Stalin was still fancying himself in the rôle of *tertius gaudens*, the great neutral Power which kept out of the imperialist war but which was all ready to exploit the ultimate exhaustion of the belligerents for the greater glory of the Communist revolution. In the first six months of the war it had suited his book to maintain the arrangement for collaboration with Hitler's Germany, while restricting its application to a minimum in practice and preparing against the day when German power might be switched round to a campaign of depredation in the east of Europe, in accordance with the precepts of *Mein Kampf*. Hence the policy of "defensive expansion" which was reflected in the seizure of great portions of Poland and the war on Finland.

While Hitler was crushing the life out of France, Stalin saw and seized the opportunity of making two quick tricks. In the middle of June, strategic centres in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were suddenly occupied by Russian forces "to guarantee fulfilment of the Pacts of Mutual Assistance signed in October, 1939." Within a week these countries, with puppet pro-Soviet Governments, had become to all intents and purposes incorporated in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; three more independent countries had been forcibly annexed by a predatory neighbour. Stalin made the *obligato* reverence to his German

confederate : to allay the excitement caused by the massing of Soviet troops on the borders of the Baltic States—eighteen to twenty divisions was the number admitted—the Tass agency was instructed to publish the declaration that—

" Neighbourly relations between the Soviet Union and Germany resulting from the conclusion of the non-aggression pact cannot be shaken by any rumours or petty propaganda, since these relations are based, not on any transient motives of an economic character, but on the fundamental interests of the Soviet Union and Germany as States."

Ten days later there was another instalment of this stand-and-deliver policy. M. Molotov handed to the Roumanian Minister in Moscow an ultimatum demanding the immediate cession of the Roumanian provinces of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. Russian aircraft flew over Bessarabia in large numbers, and King Carol had no alternative but to accept. No help was forthcoming at the moment from Germany or Italy, whose Governments were much too busily engaged plucking the carcass of France. The settlement of the Bessarabian question after twenty-two years of diplomatic conflict was hailed by *Izvestia* as "a contribution to the cause of peace, and the best illustration of the Soviet policy of applying peaceful methods to disputable issues"! The annexation of Northern Bukovina seemed to suggest that the Soviet Union was not content to leave Germany and Italy in undisputed possession of the keys of power in the Balkans. (Reports from Swiss sources stated that the Russians had also demanded control of the Danube estuary at Braila, Galatz, and Constanza, *plus* control of the oil-fields and a change in the political system of Roumania ; but these reports were officially denied in Bucharest.) Another indication of Russia's renewed interest in Europe was the resumption, after a lapse of more than twenty years, of diplomatic relations with Yugo-Slavia, which was announced on June 24th.

The Russian policy of " peace and neutrality " was duly recorded by M. Molotov in his speech at the seventh session of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union on August 1st. Recent acquisitions of territory, he explained, had resulted in an increase of the population of the Union of over 23 millions—of whom nineteen-twentieths had formerly been part of the U.S.S.R., but had been forcibly torn away when the country was weak. The operations in the north had given Russia much-needed ice-

free ports. On the question of the advance westward to the Danube he was not communicative.

The fall of France was important for the lesser States of the Continent. The first move which can be seen as a direct consequence was taken by Spain. Having formally exchanged her nominal status of "neutrality" for one of "non-belligerency" on the Italian model on June 12th, two days later, without any preliminary warning, she sent Moorish troops into Tangier to occupy the city and international zone. While this action may have been taken in accordance with a well-concerted plan for stirring up mischief in the Western Mediterranean—Spanish foreign policy being still almost completely in fee to the Axis—it seems possible that it was the impetuous act of Falangist elements. It is credibly reported, indeed, that, like Italy, Spain was proposing to play the jackal and take advantage of the collapse of the French Army to occupy those portions of French Morocco which she covets, but that German diplomacy was set in motion to induce General Franco to bide his time—with a promise that Spain would get her share of the spoils in due course, when Hitler had finished with Britain and there was no danger of resistance by the leaders of the French colonial empire. This pressure was effective. But Tangier was the consolation prize. Assurances were freely given that the Spanish military representative, Colonel Yuste, had no intention of disturbing the international administration of the zone or the treaty-guaranteed neutrality—and as freely flouted four and a half months later, when the Spanish authorities announced that the Commission of Control and the Legislative Assembly were abolished and that the laws and administrative regulations of Spanish Morocco would henceforth rule likewise in Tangier.

Agitation for the restoration of Gibraltar continued throughout the summer, and was endorsed by General Franco himself in an address to Army, Navy, and Air chiefs on July 17th, anniversary of the "glorious rebellion." But, actually, the taking of Tangier was much nearer to Spaniards' hearts; also, they still respected the British Navy. This is particularly true of the *Generalísimo* himself—to whom, incidentally, Britain's Navy was of immense service during the civil war. Indeed, despite the intense German propaganda with which Spain has been drenched for years, one feels that General Franco, for all his overt obedience to the behests of his fellow-dictators, is not thinking so much in terms of a complete Axis victory as of a sufficient challenge to the traditional Anglo-French domination of the Peninsula to allow Spain a

more important rôle, in keeping with her imperial traditions, when the inevitable peace conference meets. At all events he has been careful not to put all his eggs in one basket. Quietly, but deliberately, he has "covered" himself—every Spaniard is something of a gambler. He has taken out insurances against a British victory in the shape of sundry financial Agreements with Britain, together with political and economic pacts with Portugal. His brother, Nicolas Franco, Ambassador in Lisbon, who is an ex-naval officer, supplies a link with British naval elements.

With the Atlantic seaboard under the protection of the British Navy, Dr. Salazar was able to hold firmly to the course of keeping Portugal out of the war. But, otherwise, by July 1940 the shadow of the swastika had more or less enveloped all the countries of the Continent, and until the failure of the Italian invasion of Greece, it was true to say that, practically speaking, Britain no longer retained a foothold in Europe. (Early in June further resistance by the patriotic Norwegian forces was recognized to be hopeless, and on June 10th King Haakon and his Government, now in London, gave the order to cease fire. The British and French troops were duly withdrawn from their positions in Northern Norway, guarding Narvik, at the same time.)

Germany still held the initiative. Her next move was south-eastward—in Roumania. On June 1st M. Gafencu, Foreign Minister, resigned to make way for M. Gigurtu, formerly vice-president of the group of National Rebirth deputies in the Chamber. The party organ hastened to declare that this change would not modify or influence foreign policy as outlined by the King on September 9th, 1939. (M. Gafencu, who had the reputation of being well-disposed to the democracies, was later appointed Ambassador in Moscow.) But the shadow of coming events was visible in a commentary of the newspaper *Curentul* on June 6th, which stated :

"Roumanian policy will require an appreciation of Roumanian interests, which are based on geography and economics. We cannot change our neighbours, nor alter historical destinies or great expansions, but we can choose friends and allies most suitable for the preservation of our interests. From the Channel to the Italian and Russian borders is an area of German influence."

On the same day a new trade agreement was signed with Great Britain. The catastrophe of France, however, compelled King Carol to do some

## THE DIPLOMATIC WAR

quick thinking, and when Russia took a hand, he swallowed his pride and sought to come to terms with Hitler. On July 1st the Foreign Minister was instructed to define "the reorientation of Roumanian foreign policy," and the Government took the decisive step of formally renouncing the Anglo-French Guarantee of April 13th, 1939. It was believed that Germany, in her own interests, would support Roumania in resisting any further Russian advances, though there was nothing to be done about the occupation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.

On July 4th the Government was again reconstructed, M. Gigurtu taking over the premiership and M. Manoilescu, a creature of the Axis, becoming Foreign Minister. In a broadcast statement the Prime Minister admitted that "the directing of Roumania's foreign policy within the framework of the Axis combination . . . means the total transformation of the internal political structure, dominated by an effective and creative nationalist conception." The withdrawal of Roumania from the League of Nations was announced on July 11th. As a sample of the new orientation one may cite an article published in the *Bukaresti Tageblatt* on July 14th, declaring roundly that all Europe must be organized to encompass the defeat of Britain. It went on to say that individual States could not be allowed to pick and choose their position in the new order, but must accept that allotted to them, and to observe that Hungary could not be expected to be satisfied with a mere "mechanical reorganization of frontiers." This last phrase was an alarm-signal. For Hungary, following a visit of her Premier and Foreign Minister to Munich on July 10th for discussions with Ribbentrop and Ciano, was proposing to exploit the new situation and, with Germany's backing, to press her long-standing claim to the Transylvanian lands ceded to Roumania in 1919. Yet on the same day, July 14th, the Roumanian Prime Minister, broadcasting to the nation, was proclaiming with emphasis that Roumania was determined to defend her frontiers.

There was yet another frontier question with which the unhappy Roumanian Government had to deal. The Bulgarian Government was pressing its claim for the restoration of the Southern Dobrudja, and on July 18th, following reported clashes with the local authorities and a general exodus of the Bulgarian minority zealots, the Minister in Bucharest was instructed to open negotiations on Bulgaria's claim. At first Roumania turned a deaf ear, the assumption being that Germany would not back the Bulgarians owing to the Russian danger. But evidently by this time Hitler had decided that Roumania was easy game and that King



KING CAROL OF ROUMANIA



Carol needed to be taught a lesson. And so the first series of the summer's diplomatic journeyings began—the Ministers of small States summoned to hear their lord's command. The Bulgarian Prime Minister and M. Popov, Foreign Minister, presented themselves at Berchtesgaden on July 27th via Salzburg, where they had coincided with their Roumanian opposite numbers. The latter went on to Rome, where they got no comfort.

The upshot of these preliminary conversations was that Roumania was advised to come to terms with both Bulgaria and Hungary. On July 31st the Foreign Minister, in a statement to the Press, foreshadowed measures of appeasement, which would include an exchange of populations, and tried to sugar the pill by maintaining that Roumania was an entirely free agent, that "our political and economic independence will be absolute in the coming order of south-eastern Europe. . . . The Axis Powers have no other intention than that of becoming our best clients and our preferred suppliers." It was the Bulgarian negotiations which made the best progress. Sofia was fortified, incidentally, by an intimation from the British Government that it would look favourably on an amicable settlement of the Dobrudja question. A broadcast statement by the Roumanian Premier on August 8th, defending the pro-Axis orientation, was notable for its conciliatory tone as regards Sofia, with which a settlement not involving the cession of any Roumanian population appeared possible. On August 18th a meeting of delegations at the Royal Palace at Craiova drew up the new settlement. Two provinces in the Dobrudja were to go back to Bulgaria, and the frontier was fixed on the 1912 line, running from just north of Silistria to a point on the Black Sea just south of Mangalia. Bulgaria undertook to arrange for the transfer of all the Roumanians in the area, and also those in Bulgaria, numbering some 50,000. This was a triumph for King Boris's policy of "revision without war." Honour was satisfied in Bucharest.

But the period of tribulation was only just beginning. The dispute with Hungary was a much harder nut to crack. Hungary's appetite for treaty revision had been whetted by her successes after the Munich settlement of September, 1938. Transylvania, moreover, was the claim dearest to the hearts of the land-owning oligarchy who ruled in Budapest, many of whom had possessed large estates there. Early in 1940 it had been hoped that Hungary, while maintaining an attitude of hostility to the Balkan Entente because of its purpose of stabilizing the *status quo*, would postpone her claims on Roumania until the end of the war.

Russia's move, which set in motion the process of dismemberment of Roumania, upset these calculations, and Hungary determined to have her share.

The Transylvanian lands never came under the complete domination of the Turk, so that the cities have a long, uninterrupted, and splendid tradition. The soil contains many minerals lacking in both Old Roumania and Hungary proper ; and there were important industries. For a long period there had been three privileged " nations "—the Magyars, the Saxons, and the Szeklers—and the Roumanian or Vlach population, which gradually became the most numerous group, was " kept under," until emancipation by the Treaty of Trianon. For this reason alone the thought of giving up the self-respecting rights acquired in 1919 was bitter to Roumanians. Moreover, the more lyrical patriots claimed that Transylvania was the cradle of the Roumanian race—the place of refuge where the Latin tradition had never died and from which their fathers in time descended to the plains. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the reports of negotiations for meeting Hungary's claims led to violent recrimination, and for the time being Dr. Maniu, the able leader of the Transylvanian Peasant Party, made common cause with his political opponents in Bucharest to try to stiffen his Government's attitude. Under pressure from Germany the Roumanian Government was disposed to agree to a minimum of territorial revision—the cession of three frontier departments, Satu Mare, Salaj Bihor, and Arad (excluding the town of that name)—*plus* a substantial exchange of populations. The expedient of an exchange of populations without any territorial changes was scarcely feasible, since the Roumanians in Hungary were not more than 80,000, whereas there were some 1½ million Magyars in Roumania.

Negotiations duly took place at Turnu Severin. But they were broken off on August 24th—by the Hungarians—who by this time were asking for the cession of the greater part of Transylvania, some thirteen departments. In Budapest the charge was made that the Roumanian delegates, instead of making concrete proposals, had sought to " carry on a theoretical debate " in order to gain time to move troops from the Dobrudja to Transylvania. Certainly there were tentative preparations for war on both sides, and, as if to stage the necessary " incident," Hungarian planes flew over Moldavia and attacked Roumanian aircraft. They also dropped bombs on Satu Mare and propaganda leaflets on Brasov in Transylvania, according to an official statement in Bucharest.

Hitler was anxious for various reasons to avoid an extension of war

operations to the Balkans. He decided that the situation was getting out of hand and that only drastic treatment would meet the case. There was a peremptory summons of the Hungarian Ministers to a conference at Vienna, where Ribbentrop and Ciano were ready with a comprehensive plan for a Hungaro-Roumanian settlement. M. Manoilescu, the Foreign Minister, attended for Roumania. This scheme, which came to be known as the Vienna Award—and was, of course, a *Diktat* conceived entirely in the interests of Germany—provided for the cession by Roumania of the whole of Northern Transylvania and three Szekler provinces. The ceded territory was to be evacuated by Roumanian troops within a fortnight from the day of signature of the treaty, but Roumanian nationals would be given the opportunity of opting for Roumania within a time-limit of six months, and would then have a year in which to leave the territory, taking with them their movables and realizing their immovable property. Hungary pledged herself to treat Roumanians who opted for Hungary on equal terms with her own citizens. There were other minority provisions accompanying the Award for the especial benefit of Germans in Hungary, and it was clear that every precaution had now been taken for Hungary's complete vassalage to the Axis. Roumania was no better off: some weeks later similar prerogatives were claimed—and secured—for Germans in Roumania. In an exchange of Notes Germany and Italy solemnly agreed to guarantee the integrity of Roumanian territory, and Roumania duly accepted this guarantee. Messages passed between Berlin and Rome expressing gratification that Führer and Duce had now solved the last remaining question in south-eastern Europe.

Whatever may have been the feelings of the Bucharest Government, the Roumanian people was bitterly rebellious against this capitulation. Nor was public indignation allayed by the official explanation (e.g. a broadcast by Dr. Pop, the Foreign Minister) that the only alternatives were unconditional acceptance of the Award or a resistance "which would inexorably have led to the complete annihilation of the Roumanian State." Peasants in Transylvania prepared to do battle for their lands, and Dr. Maniu, their respected leader, telegraphed to Hitler and Mussolini that Transylvania and Banat could not be persuaded to accept their fiat. Demonstrations in Cluj (Koloszvar) and other towns had to be broken up by troops. But it was no good. In 1919 Roumania had obtained too much, and King Carol had now left his country defenceless by his renunciation of the British guarantee and his policy towards Soviet Russia. The Hungaro-Roumanian Mixed Commission set up at the Vienna

meeting assembled at Oradea on September 2nd and announced its decisions. The Hungarian Army was to cross the frontier at several points on September 5th, and the occupation of the ceded areas would be completed by September 13th. The only effect of the popular effervescence was the Government's resignation on September 4th, the appointment of a new Cabinet with dictatorial powers under General Antonescu, who was known to have close associations with the Iron Guard (Roumanian Fascist elements)—and finally, on September 6th, the abdication of King Carol in favour of his young son Michael. After that Germany had it all her own way in Roumania—and was further along the road to the Black Sea and the Near East.

From the fact that the President and Prime Minister of Slovakia, Germany's convenient dependency for her strategy in eastern Europe, were among the visitors to Salzburg at the end of July, it is clear that Hitler was already feeling his way towards the Ribbentrop policy of securing a stake in the Eastern Mediterranean. Abject devotion to "the great creator of the new Europe" was expressed in a Press statement published in Bratislava on their return—and gratification that "we Slovaks . . . are the first to be co-ordinated in the struggle for the realization of the inspired plans of the Führer." The gamble was worth trying, as Russia was obviously disinclined to make trouble; indeed, as Hitler had discovered in the course of the Roumanian negotiations, Stalin was not averse from helping in the process of "squeeze" so long as it would help to maintain the peace. The junior partner of the Axis could be rewarded by a certain satisfaction at the increased isolation of his neighbour, Yugoslavia, and, eventually, perhaps some territorial gains in Anatolia—which were among Italy's ambitions—when Turkey had been brought to heel. The strategic purpose behind every shift of Nazi policy is constant. After bringing about the collapse of the western defences of Roumania, Germany had contrived to put Yugoslavia "on the spot"—exposed now to attack from Italy, Germany, and also Hungary, should the latter seek to indulge her revisionist claim on this side too. Actually, until he took the plunge with the Vienna Award, Hitler's idea had been to cosset Yugoslavia, for the time being, by exploiting the chronic Macedonian question, the Macedonians being instigated to demand an autonomous State to be linked federally with the Yugoslav peoples, to the discomfiture of Bulgaria and Greece. Now, with Roumania breaking up, there was no need to play this card; Bulgaria, surely, would be no more in a position to dispute Germany's sway than was

Denmark, while Italy could presumably deal with Yugoslavia, either straightway or after the necessary intimidation of Greece—whom she could threaten from Albania.

And indeed all the evidence seemed to show that, despite his own sympathies and those of the great majority of the Yugoslav people, Prince Paul, the Regent, and his Cabinet were being forced into acceptance of Hitler's New Order. An Agreement providing for a further extension of trade with Germany was signed on August 4th. The dissolution of the Balkan Entente, which was under discussion at Salzburg, seemed to be an accomplished fact. There was one State, however, which refused to be awed by Germany's power or frightened out of her allegiance to Britain—despite the latter's apparently parlous plight after the subjugation of France. Turkey, under the able guidance of President Ismet Inönü (the former Ismet Pasha), Mustafa Kemal's successor, had come to appreciate her immensely responsible position as the accredited sentinel of the Dardanelles. The Government had discounted the contingency of Italian intervention in the war and was not impressed by assurances that no aggressive action against her was intended. Semi-official comment in Ankara in the early days of June made Turkey's position clear by pointing out that similar assurances had been received from both Germany and Italy following the Declaration made by Great Britain, France, and Turkey in May 1939, and, nevertheless, Turkey had duly proceeded to the Treaty of Alliance with England and France of November 1939. Trade relations with Britain had been constantly strengthened to balance the commercial connexion with Germany, who was still taking about half Turkey's foreign trade. Immediately upon Italy's entry into the war an official statement declared that Italo-Turkish commercial relations were suspended, and the Press published articles condemning Italy's action and describing her assurances as worthless. It was stated "in competent quarters" in Istanbul that Turkey would never permit the installation of a Power other than France in Syria; she would, however, accept a declaration of Syrian independence.

But, holding the keys of the Eastern Mediterranean as she did, Turkey was not bound under her treaty with Britain to declare war on Italy. There was a special rider in the Agreement of Alliance (Protocol 2) whereby, as in the case of the Montreux Convention regarding the Straits, Turkey could not be committed to any course of action likely to bring her into conflict with Soviet Russia, her powerful neighbour, good

relations with whom had been the basis of Mustafa Kemal's foreign policy. In a statement in the Kamutay (Chamber) on June 26th the Prime Minister justified the policy of continued non-belligerency by this clause. Articles in the Press drew an interesting parallel between the action of patriotic Turkish leaders after the war of 1914-18 and that of General de Gaulle, the representative leader of Free France, in the present plight of his country—and went so far as to exhort the General to organize resistance against the enslavement of his country from North Africa and not merely confine his activities to London. With Government and people in such a mood, the attempts by German propaganda to make trouble between Turkey and Soviet Russia were unsuccessful.

Turkey's realist policy was, of course, based on an implicit faith in Britain's sea power, and her ability to control affairs in the Eastern Mediterranean. Another country, placed in a very similar position and adopting a similar policy, was Egypt. Under the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance of August 26th, 1936, the aid promised by the King of Egypt in the event of war consisted, under Article VII, in

"furnishing to his Majesty the King and Emperor on Egyptian territory, in accordance with the Egyptian system of administration and legislation, all the facilities and assistance in his power, including the use of his ports, aerodromes, and means of communication, and including the establishment of martial law and an effective censorship, necessary to render these facilities and assistance effective."

Military clauses of the Treaty gave Britain the right to station forces in Egyptian territory in the vicinity of the Suez Canal, to ensure, in co-operation with the Egyptian forces, the defence of the Canal—and fixed the number of troops and Air Force pilots to be stationed at any one time in Egypt in the Canal Zone or elsewhere. When war broke out in September 1939, Egypt, in Lord Halifax's words, "broke off diplomatic and commercial relations with Germany and in consultation with the British Government took all the other measures which had been foreseen as necessary under the Treaty of Alliance." Such measures included the declaration of a "state of siege," but did not involve any formal declaration of war. When Italy declared war on the Allies, the Egyptian Government took the same course, although there was a section of opinion, of which the spokesman was the Speaker of the Chamber, which desired full military participation. In a Note sent to the Italian Govern-

ment in Rome on June 15th the Government declared that Egypt would only take part in the war if Italian troops invaded Egyptian territory, bombarded Egyptian towns, or carried out air raids on Egyptian military objectives. A new Government—a coalition of all parties except the Wafd, which was demanding a general election—came into office on June 23rd, but held firmly to this course, even when, within a few weeks, the troops of Marshal Graziani, pushing along from the Libyan desert regions, penetrated some sixty miles into Egypt desert territory, and Britain's forces under General Wavell fell back according to plan. There was, indeed, no reason to doubt Egypt's solidarity with Britain; Italian propaganda in Cairo had overshot its mark—and opinion throughout the Islamic world had taken Mussolini's measure. Britain's position in Egypt was substantially fortified, however, by the decision announced on August 7th that, since most of her normal European markets were now closed to her, Britain would arrange to purchase that year's entire cotton crop. This had been one of the requests made by the Wafd Party in a Memorial addressed to the British Government in the previous April.

With Turkey and Egypt remaining loyal to their obligations, Britain could face the prospect of an Italian advance from Libya to threaten the Suez Canal with a certain degree of confidence. Yet she had just cause for anxiety so long as Graziani's forces outnumbered the British strength in the Middle East by three to one. It was heartening, therefore, that British control of the sea passage was soon shown to be entirely effective. In an Empire broadcast of July 31st, the Minister of Shipping was able to state that in all the operations of transporting troops to and fro from various distant parts of the world (e.g. Australia, India), not one ship had been sunk nor one life lost through enemy action. Sea power as the basis of strategy was once more vindicated. Steps were taken at this time to tighten the blockade whereby Germany was being virtually cut off from all overseas sources of food and raw materials. When the Pétain Government capitulated, many British commentators had indulged in a certain amount of wishful thinking about the overseas possessions of France, imagining that the military leaders in Morocco and Syria, for example, would break away from metropolitan France and prefer to fight on under the protection of the British flag and British sea power. General Nogues, Resident-General of Morocco, and General Mittelhauser, Commander-in-Chief in Syria, appeared to waver. But Britain's chances of victory looked so poor in July 1940 that one can

understand the decision of most of France's proconsuls in her Empire to stand with Vichy. The prestige of Marshal Pétain and General Weygand was still considerable, whereas no one outside military circles had ever heard of de Gaulle. In any case, the idea of the French overseas dependencies breaking away from the parent body could only have arisen from a misapprehension of the nature of the French Empire—which is essentially an integral part of France.

In the circumstances, the British Government had no alternative but to extend its blockade to Algeria, Tunisia, and French Morocco, no less than to metropolitan France. The Minister of Economic Warfare explained this in the course of a statement to Parliament on July 30th. But he was at pains to give assurances that the further extension to all seaborne goods consigned to any European port—as well as to those of North Africa and certain Atlantic islands—was not designed to strangle neutral states' trade. Where supplies could reach a neutral state without the risk of falling into the hands of the enemy, navicerts would be granted on such a scale as to allow imports adequate for domestic consumption, though not for re-export. It would be the policy of His Majesty's Government, he added, not only to allow such adequate supplies to pass, but to assist neutral countries to obtain them. (This praiseworthy attitude was particularly marked in regard to "non-belligerent" Spain.) Which did not, of course, stop Germany condemning the various elements of British blockade policy as a "violation of all the international rules of sea warfare." In a Note to neutral Governments on August 17th, the German Government announced a "total blockade" of Great Britain by way of reprisal.

According to the German soothsayers, Britain was to have realized the hopelessness of going on with the war by the middle of August. The Germans seem really to have believed that British opinion would, when the full implications of the French disaster had sunk in, demand that the Government make the best terms it could with Hitler. They took no account of Mr. Churchill's grim but confident survey of the situation in the House of Commons on June 19th, in which he spoke of the "great reasons for vigilance but none for panic or despair"—presumably because, as ever, they failed to appreciate the significance of sea power. Mr. Churchill, in a broadcast on July 14th, after describing the action at Oran to prevent the French battleships from falling into German hands, went on to elaborate in memorable words this theme of the defence of the British Isles from invasion :

"We are determined," he said, "to defend every village, every town, and every city. The vast mass of London itself, fought street by street, could easily devour an entire hostile army, and we would rather see London laid in ruins and ashes than that it should be tamely and abjectly enslaved. . . .

"Bearing ourselves humbly before God, but conscious that we serve an unfolding purpose, we are ready to defend our native land against the invasion by which it is threatened. We are fighting by ourselves alone. But we are not fighting for ourselves alone. Here in this strong city of refuge, which enshrines the title-deeds of human progress, and is of deep consequence to Christian civilization ; here, girt about by the seas and oceans where the Navy reigns, shielded from above by the prowess and devotion of our airmen, we await undismayed the impending assault."

But the only effect in Germany was to provoke personal abuse of the Prime Minister and the wildest threats about the Battle of Britain which was about to begin. A good sample is an article in the *National Zeitung* of Essen on July 16th :

" . . . If Churchill does not prefer to free England and the world of his presence, then the same inexorable fate will overtake England that struck down and destroyed France. . . . If Churchill succeeds in maintaining his position to the bitter end, then the British people's awakening will take place in circumstances more frightful even than the fates which England has already brought upon other peoples in this war."

At the height of this campaign of boasting and vilification Hitler took it upon himself to make, nevertheless, one more last appeal to reason : his patience was not *quite* exhausted. In a speech to the Reichstag on July 19th, lasting well over an hour and a half, he proceeded to chastise the Franco-British warmongers, then to extol Germany's military successes. A front stretching from the North Cape to the Spanish frontier had been achieved with only slight losses, while from the spheres of economic interest controlled by the conquered countries Germany and Italy had at their disposal 200 million people, among whom they could draw on 130 millions for military man-power, while over 70 millions were employed in purely economic activities.

"Mr. Churchill ought perhaps for once to believe me when I prophesy that a great empire will be destroyed—an empire which it was never my intention to destroy or even to harm. I do,

however, realize that this struggle, if it continues, can end only with the complete annihilation of one or the other of the two adversaries. Mr. Churchill may believe that this will be Germany. I know it will be Britain. . . ."

He had his answer, publicly, in a great broadcast address to England and the U.S.A. by General Smuts two days later, supplemented by a statement from Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, who indicted Germany's purpose as "the fundamental challenge of anti-Christ" and looked forward calmly to the day "when Hitler's mad plans for Europe would be shattered by the unconquerable passion of man for freedom."

It was noticeable that, as the day of reckoning approached, the idea that victory in the Battle of Britain was to be short and swift was abandoned. Robert Ley, writing in *Angriff* on July 31st, admitted that "the fight against England will be hard . . . England's power is great . . ." and the wireless bulletins at this time, alleging that the attack on Britain had actually begun five weeks earlier, "with U-boat triumphs, successful thrusts by motor torpedo-boats, attacks by bombers, and successful battles by fighters over the Channel and English coasts," etc., were careful to predict that it was not to be like the attack on France, but slow and sure.

The month of August came. There was no invasion from the sea. Reconnaissance raids by planes, to test the British defences, found no weakness. But the Germans continued to mass their craft for the task of crushing this little island which dared to resist Germany's all-powerful war-machine. The month of September came—and went. The mass air attacks, on London, Liverpool, and other towns, were terrible; but quite indecisive. This country's confidence was vindicated. During these weeks the wheels of the diplomatic machine stood still, while the world watched this great struggle in the air. Or perhaps one should say—the prowess of the R.A.F. and the endurance of the British people proved the best and most effective diplomacy that Britain or any other country had ever contrived. It put an entirely different complexion on the war as seen from outside these islands, and ever more numerous friends of Britain abroad began to share the British people's own characteristic belief that England could not be beaten. By October world opinion thought this improbable.

Hitler concentrated all the summer and autumn upon this island, and the Germans continually spoke of crushing England, after having driven her from the Continent. But the war was now destined to spread to



RT HON ANTHONY EDEN, M.C., M.P



other continents, and Britain's far-flung power and influence now became visible. In every sphere our war effort was seen to be an Empire affair. Once again the mustering of men and resources from all over the globe demonstrated the abiding vitality of the British Commonwealth idea. Loyalty and the plainest self-interest alike dictated the utmost co-operation from all parts of the Empire, now that the stake was manifestly one of world domination, and aggression stalked abroad in three continents. An impressive broadcast speech by Mr. Eden, Secretary of State for War, on August 14th brought this point home :

"The map of Europe," he said, "told a flattering tale to Germany, but on the map of the world Europe became a much smaller place, and the oceans where Britannia had the last word were seen to cover twice as much of the earth's surface as all the continents put together. Superior sea power, which Britain already possessed, and superior air power which she was determined to attain, combined with an ever-increasing army, would secure her victory. When the time came for her to strike, Britain would not be alone."

Then he declared in an eloquent passage,

"the Foreign Legions now forming in our midst . . . would be swollen into a great multitude of men demanding their freedom and going out sword in hand to recover it."

The reference in this last sentence was, of course, to the muster of the freemen of Europe on British soil, represented by no less than five foreign contingents who were preparing to fight alongside the British forces. Since the unhappy experience of the B.E.F., it had come about that this island was for the time being fulfilling its "European" destiny as, in Señor S. de Madariaga's phrase, "a Noah's Ark of Free Men." Poland was represented by the Government of General Sikorski, Czecho-Slovakia by ex-President Beneš and colleagues of several parties, Holland and Norway by their sovereigns and properly constituted Governments, Free France by General de Gaulle and his coadjutors, and free Belgium by three members of the Pierlot Cabinet—which was itself marooned in unoccupied France. In greater or less degree they were making a military contribution to Britain's effort, on land, on sea, and in the air. The exploits of Polish and Czech airmen did not go unrecognized in the great air battles of these summer months. The largest of these contingents was the Polish, numbering tens of thousands of men who escaped over the

frontiers and made their way to France, were later re-formed, and given their place under the Anglo-Polish Military Agreement of August 5th. For months Czechoslovakia had continued to be our unacknowledged ally; on July 23rd, however, the Czech National Council was transformed into a Provisional Government and duly recognized by Mr. Churchill's Government. A Military Agreement, on the lines of that with Poland, was announced a few weeks later.

The position of the Free French force of volunteers serving under General de Gaulle was necessarily somewhat different from that of the others. Its status was defined in the letters and memoranda exchanged between the Prime Minister and the General on August 7th. A French National Committee of a similar character had been set up in Cairo, and within two months of its formation "Free France" could claim representation in all countries overseas where there was any substantial number of French residents. Colonel de Larminat, Chief of Staff of the French Army in Syria, and General Catroux, Commander-in-Chief in Indo-China, were among the notable Frenchmen who came to London to rally to General de Gaulle's standard.

Nevertheless, for two months or so after the capitulation, the consciousness of defeat—a sort of numbness and atrophy of the will—was so strong among Frenchmen that France was still wholly subservient to Germany. The reaction against the political system of the Third Republic, those liberal, secularist, and rationalist values which were the heritage of the French Revolution of 1789, was exploited to the utmost by the new groups that had got their hands on the levers of power—and also, of course, by German propaganda—so that French minds were at this time conditioned against any further association with a Britain battling for democracy, and, as most Frenchmen saw it, doomed to go down against the new dynamic force of the National-Socialist revolution, just as France had done. The Germans and their tools in Vichy—and ready instruments like M. Marcel Déat and M. Gaston Bergery in Paris—did their job efficiently in demonstrating that France must break completely with the old order and find her place in the new by "collaboration" with Germany. It was easy enough to represent General de Gaulle as a hireling of Britain and to lull the octogenarian Pétain with flattery and vistas of peace as the one means to France's recovery.

The Germans were all the time fastening their grip on the country. Not merely was France now divided into "occupied" and "unoccupied" territory, and a most rigid separation enforced, but the occupied territory

in its turn was divided into six zones, with varying restrictions on movement. The areas of the Eastern Zone (Alsace-Lorraine) and the adjoining North B were completely closed. The Western zone, from the Loire to the Spanish frontier, was set aside to be the subject of a special agreement at a later date. (No Jews or coloured persons were to be allowed in any circumstances to enter occupied territory.) One may say that the occupied zone was almost as much under German rule as if it had already been incorporated in the Reich. On the other hand, at any rate in the first months, the German occupation troops behaved well, and there was an obvious attempt to create material conditions contrasting favourably with those in unoccupied territory. There was a certain shortage of food, and, with no petrol available for civilian use, transport was a serious problem. A much more serious problem for the Vichy Government was that of feeding the swollen population of unoccupied France: to the normal 8 millions were added 5 or 6 million refugees from the occupied territory and from Belgium. The Germans had taken good care to have the chief food-producing areas and the major part of industrial production under their direct control. The Pétain Government made an effort to enlist the help of the United States for a request that London should agree to a modification of the blockade, and permit the passage of food supplies and commercial cargoes between France and her colonies. The European delegate to the Red Cross organization, on a visit to Vichy, gave his opinion in the middle of August that "the situation in France now is worse than in Belgium after the World War and is growing worse." M. Baudouin, Foreign Minister, on the same day made a direct appeal to the British Government, mentioning that Germany had agreed to guarantee that any goods imported would be reserved for the civilian population. This whole question of food relief for Europe was now occupying the attention of American opinion, always responsive to humanitarian appeals, and it looked as if it might become an issue in the Presidential election, which was casting its shadow over all this period. Mr. Herbert Hoover, drawing on his authority and experience in the war of 1914-18, announced on August 11th that a committee under his direction had worked out plans for arranging supplies of food during the coming winter for the 27 million innocent civilians in Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Poland—with all necessary guarantees—and that negotiations with the authorities in Great Britain and Germany were in progress.

Mr. Churchill's speech of August 20th effectually disposed of any French (or American) hopes of a mitigation of the blockade. He pointed

out that there was ample food in the countries in question, and that any hardships which might arise in the coming winter would be due to German exactions or a German failure to distribute available supplies. It was impossible, he said, to prolong the agony of Europe by allowing food to reach the Nazis "or to allow food to go in to the subjugated peoples, which certainly would be pillaged off them by their Nazi conquerors." In any case the Germans were on record as stating that they had themselves taken steps to feed the populations now under their rule. Provision, however, was duly being made for the future, in the shape of food reserves built up all over the world from the existing export surpluses.

"Let Hitler bear his responsibilities to the full, and let the peoples of Europe who groan beneath his yoke aid in every way the coming of the day when that yoke will be broken. Meanwhile, we can and we will arrange in advance for the speedy entry of food into any part of the enslaved area, when this part has been wholly cleared of German forces and has genuinely regained its freedom."

This definite refusal, naturally, provoked M. Baudouin to angry remonstrances, and in a broadcast speech on August 22nd he described it as

"an act of hostility worse perhaps than that of Oran. . . . The intention . . . is criminal. . . . It is not by using and abusing a certain privilege at Gibraltar or elsewhere that England will find a solution for the problems of the world. . . . Whether they wish it or not, understand it or not, the nations of each continent are united to one another by an ever-growing solidarity. Mr. Churchill, by forbidding food to a hungry Europe, separates England from that solidarity, out of which will arise a more just, more charitable, and more peaceful world."

This statement is an interesting indication of a European or Continental *mystique*, apart from and against Britain, with which in the future British statesmanship may have to reckon. Later M. Baudouin defined France's foreign policy, pending the peace treaty, in the following terms : "A policy of loyalty towards our conquerors, a policy of expectation in the European domain, and one of vigorous defence of our colonial Empire. . . ."

In Mr. Churchill's speech of August 20th, to which reference has been made, there was a laconic allusion to the considerable difficulties in the Mediterranean brought about by the defection of France. "If the

French Empire had continued the struggle, it might have advanced with the British Empire to the rescue of the French motherland . . . there was the example of Holland."

That was the original hope in many British quarters, based on an inadequate understanding of the French imperial idea. It is true that large numbers of Frenchmen overseas were most reluctant to accept defeat, and expressed their intention of fighting on by the side of Great Britain. But the obstacles were almost insuperable. In the first place, there was the manifest difficulty of canalizing pro-Ally opinion, in the absence of a regularly constituted body representing the Government of the mother country. Secondly, there was what has been described as "the psychological effect of remoteness." The Pétain Government took steps promptly to replace those officials in the colonies who were against capitulation by others more amenable to the policy of "appeasement."<sup>1</sup> German propaganda worked overtime, not least in representing the de Gaulle organization as composed of men who were formerly supporters of the Popular Front (the French overseas population being traditionally to the Right in political and social attachments). Nothing was more untrue. The peculiar merit of the Free French *rassemblement* was that it had no taint of politics, and individually the majority were, if anything, good Catholics and well to the Right in their opinions.

There was one important factor, however, working steadily for Britain. The economic system of the French colonies had always been geared to that of metropolitan France, and now, with the British blockade cutting communications with the latter, they were finding themselves in an economic situation which could only be remedied by active measures of reorganization so as to fit in to the British trade system. Hence the importance of the formal pledge given in a letter from Mr. Churchill to General de Gaulle that for the benefit of those elements overseas supporting the cause of Free France, "subject to the needs of our own war effort, we are prepared to extend economic assistance on a scale similar to that which we should apply in comparable circumstances to the colonies of the British Empire. . . ."

The attitude of M. Baudouin, and the unscrupulous way in which M. Laval and his friends were exploiting the prestige of Marshal Pétain and General Weygand to maintain the allegiance of the colonial adminis-

<sup>1</sup> An excellent analysis of the situation will be found in the first of a series of bi-monthly supplements to *Highway*, prepared by the Anglo-French Co-operation Committee of the Fabian Society.

trations, made it unlikely that there would be any early breakaway of the French colonies. On the other hand, Hitler had his eyes on Africa—and Syria—and, in the event of failure in the Battle of Britain, would no doubt strive every nerve to oust Britain and British influence from the Mediterranean. General de Gaulle, therefore, in agreement with the British Government, decided on active measures to try to redress the balance of forces. In a striking broadcast to the world on August 22nd he pointed out that the Vichy Government was now busy surrendering the keys of the French Empire to Germany. "In this way," he said, "Hitler's eagle and Mussolini's vulture could easily settle on Casablanca, Tunis, Lake Chad, Dakar, Jibuti, and Beirut . . ." and he instanced the case of a stock of 800 aeroplanes, intended as the mainstay of France's African defence, which were now being taken away from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia and brought to the air-ground near Marseilles to be placed at the disposal of the enemy. (The Vichy Government subsequently denied that this transfer had been made.)

Within a week General de Gaulle was able to announce that the process of rallying to the Free French cause, for which he hoped, had begun. The Chad Colony, the north-east province of the vast expanse of French Equatorial Africa, was the first to pledge its allegiance to the flag of Free France, under the leadership of its able negro Governor, M. Eboué. The French Cameroons followed on August 29th, and the same day General de Gaulle was able to claim that the whole of French Equatorial Africa had come over to him. It transpired later that the Governor of Gabon, the south-western sector, went back on this decision, and led a remnant of "loyalists" in opposition to the rebellion; so that General de Gaulle's forces had to undertake mopping-up operations, by columns marching in from the Cameroons and from the Belgian Congo, to capture the two ports of Libreville and Port Gentil. But the essential gain of contact between the French and Belgian Congo areas had been achieved; and the great advantage of securing French Equatorial Africa for the British cause was that it made possible uninterrupted communication by air from the west to east of Africa. This was important for the campaign in Egypt—as was demonstrated when, in November, it was a question of sending out fighter planes to help the Greeks without impairing our strength in the Middle Eastern sector. New Caledonia and other possessions in French Oceania announced their adherence to General de Gaulle a few days later, as did also the Governor of Pondicherry in the name of French India on September 9th.

By this time the Vichy Government had come to realize that the de Gaulle movement was a force to be reckoned with, and it feared that the contagion might spread throughout the French possessions in Africa. Its German masters were particularly concerned about French West Africa which contained in Dakar, on the coast of Senegal, one of the finest naval harbours in the world. There were also several up-to-date air bases in the vicinity, which Germany had long since marked out for herself. On September 10th, therefore, orders were given to six of the French warships (three destroyers and three cruisers) still in service to leave their base at Toulon and make tracks for the West African ports in an effort to stop the rot. By an oversight—for which Mr. Churchill had to do penance later in the House of Commons—these vessels were allowed through the Straits of Gibraltar. Three of them continued on their way to Libreville, on the coast of Gabon in French Equatorial Africa, to stiffen resistance to General de Gaulle's *coup*, but they were intercepted by British warships and obliged to return to Dakar.

The Vichy Government had evidently got wind of General de Gaulle's intentions. So that when the latter, having been informed that the inhabitants of Senegalia were eager to rally likewise to Free France, attempted a landing on September 23rd he was met with gunfire from the naval batteries, and a number of the landing party were seriously injured. British vessels, which were covering the operation but had instructions to do no more than "keep the ring," refrained from intervention, and the de Gaulle forces, military and naval, withdrew, declaring in the *communiqué* explaining the origin and purpose of the operations that the General did not wish to be a party to fighting between Frenchmen.

This somewhat lame excuse for a manifest failure did not carry conviction; and for a time it seemed that General de Gaulle's prestige would suffer as a result of the Dakar incident. Mr. Churchill's explanation in the House of Commons on October 8th, however, cleared the air, and made it plain that a considerable share of the blame attached to officials of the British Admiralty for allowing the six French ships through the Straits of Gibraltar. The incident at any rate drew from spokesmen of the Vichy Government declarations that there was no danger of Dakar becoming German or being used against England. In righteous indignation Admiral Darlan, Minister of Marine, announced that France had taken reprisals for "the British attack at Dakar"—a squadron of French aeroplanes was reported to have bombed Gibraltar—and, again, he denied that Dakar had been threatened by any Power so that "in trying to occupy

this key to the South Atlantic the English were only following their own selfish interests. . . . This new British aggression is simply an attempt to reduce our families to hunger, to ruin our unhappy country, and to dismember our Empire."

In a message from "the Head of the State"—the first addressed to France overseas since the establishment of the new regime—broadcast on September 4th, Marshal Pétain proclaimed that, though she had lost in the war three-fifths of her territory through occupation, France had retained her unity unimpaired. As an earnest of a more positive policy on the part of Vichy, General Weygand was sent to North Africa as Delegate-General to co-ordinate the policies of the several administrations. When this news became known, it was freely said that France's most celebrated General had become disgusted with German behaviour and German methods, and was only too glad to get away from the atmosphere of a servile France and to have the opportunity of preventing the Nazis from getting a hold on Morocco and West Africa, as stepping-stones to their goal of world domination.

Rumours persisted that, under various guises, e.g. as delegates of the Armistice Commissions, Germany and Italy were already well represented by agents in the districts surrounding the key-points of Africa. At Dakar, in particular, the Germans were said to be virtually in control, having taken over the administration of the censorship and the port air lines and overland routes. Two important air lines, one through Toulouse, Alicante, Oran, and Fez to Dakar, the other (Italian) with one branch going to Tunis, the other through the Balearics and Cadiz to Casablanca, were the chief means of penetration. And there was ceaseless activity in building up air and sea bases at Dakar for trade with South America. (The importance of Dakar is that of a chief key-point to Atlantic control. In the wars of the eighteenth century Pitt had maintained that the island of Goree, opposite Dakar, must be held by the British at all hazards, but in the nineteenth century his teachings had been forgotten, and it was allowed to slip into French hands.)

For this very reason another Power displayed a special interest in these new developments—the United States. President Roosevelt, detecting the shadow of coming events, had taken steps to inform the Pétain Government of the United States' concern with anything likely to affect Atlantic security; on August 10th, incidentally, Washington had duly announced the re-opening of the American Consulate at Dakar.

The summer months saw a notable extension of President Roosevelt's

activity, and the policy of "all possible help short of war" clearly had the support of a substantial majority of American opinion. The American position will be surveyed in the next volume of this History, and here the principal events only need be recorded; the announcement to Congress on September 3rd regarding the lease of naval and air bases in Newfoundland and Bermuda, and the right to acquire a number of similar bases in British possessions of the West Indies, in consideration of the transfer to Great Britain of fifty over-age destroyers; the passing of the Conscription Bill by the House of Representatives and the Senate; formal approval by the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate of the Act of Havana regarding defence and economic co-operation in the Western Hemisphere; preparations for a joint Anglo-American defence of the Pacific similar to the plans for defence of the Atlantic—and, as a corollary, a more positive policy with regard to Japan, exemplified in the President's declaration (September 26th) of an embargo on the export of iron and steel scrap as from October 16th except to countries of the Western Hemisphere and to Great Britain. The choice of date was significant. It was timed, that is to say, to coincide with the end of the three months' experimental ban on the passage of war supplies along the Burma Road which Britain had imposed.

The Japanese Government, during this time, had been steadily proceeding on the basis that Britain's difficulty was Japan's opportunity. A polite but definite snub to the British Ambassador, who had gone to see the Foreign Minister about Japan's new declarations of solidarity with the Axis Powers, was followed on July 28th by the arrest on charges of espionage of a number of British subjects in Tokyo, Kobe, Osaka, and other cities. On August 1st the Cabinet in Tokyo issued an important declaration on foreign policy about the New Order in greater Eastern Asia to be achieved by Japan's development of Manchukuo, China, and the South Seas. The goal, it was explained, was national self-sufficiency, foreign policy being directed first towards the complete settlement of the China affair and then the advancement of the national fortunes by taking a far-sighted view of the drastic changes impending in the world situation, etc. . . . "From now on Japan will not make vain efforts to shake hands with countries who cannot be made into friends. The Japanese Government is through with toadying."

Two days later Japan's newly appointed special envoy to the Dutch East Indies told the Press in an interview that Japan proposed to emancipate the Dutch East Indies, long exploited and oppressed as a foreign

colony, so as to ensure fair distribution of their products, even though such action might involve friction with the United States. And when it became known that two Japanese subjects had been arrested in London on suspicion of hostile activities, the newspapers were enraged at this act of "retaliation." And the local Japanese commanders accepted with a bad grace a further British "gesture" in the announcement on August 9th that British troops stationed in Shanghai and North China were being withdrawn for service elsewhere. But the atmosphere calmed down. Evidently Japan's leaders had decided that better results would be achieved by quiet and cautious methods.

That Japan had designs on the Dutch East Indies was manifest. But another, easier, road was now open to her. Early in August it became known that negotiations had been started with the Vichy Government for "adjustment" of Franco-Japanese relations—in other words, Japan was demanding the use of certain bases in French Indo-China for conducting operations to bring to an end the obstinate "China affair." A "satisfactory agreement," in the words of a *communiqué* from Vichy, was reached on September 22nd. Fighting actually broke out in the Dongdang area (after the local commander had refused to accept what amounted to an ultimatum)—100 miles north-east of Hanoi—but the incident was soon settled. The Vichy Government was in no mood to resist. M. Baudouin was reported to have made a statement on September 20th that France was compelled to give a realistic answer to Japan because the United States could not promise more than a verbal protest if Indo-China were attacked. This description of United States policy at the time may or may not have been true—at the time of the first press reports of a Japanese ultimatum to Indo-China Mr. Cordell Hull was understood to have informed the Japanese Embassy in Washington that any threat to the *status quo*, either there or in the region of the Dutch East Indies, was "a matter to which this Government attaches importance"; but he would not go beyond this sort of non-committal statement. But in any case the Pétain Government was so helpless that Japan could enforce any demands she might care to make. She contented herself with the facilities required for the prosecution of the campaign against China.

That was not quite the whole story, however. Japan still had a pawn to move into position. French weakness was to be exploited, too, by Thailand (Siam), which is to all intents and purposes Japan's client-State in that area. (It was after the return of a Siamese military mission

which toured French Indo-China in the spring of 1939 that the new name of Thailand was adopted, indicating a claim to territories across the Siamese border which were inhabited by kindred peoples.) Whether merely under the inspiration of her own nationalists—who could point to very high-handed action by France, back in 1893, resulting in the cession of border provinces by the weak Siamese administration—or, acting as the cat's paw of Japan, the Thailand Government advanced its claims and was not to be appeased by a mere promise on the part of Vichy to ratify the non-aggression pact signed with France on June 12th. (A British Non-aggression Pact signed at the same time had meanwhile duly come into operation.) Negotiations dragged on for two months or so, and then Vichy discovered that, to add to its troubles, it had a miniature war on its hands. By that time, however, thanks to British resistance, the complexion of affairs in Europe had changed considerably, and there was not the same inclination on the part of Japan to use her Siamese pawn. The whole episode was a warning of danger for Britain in the Pacific from an unexpected quarter. A Thailand under Japanese domination, within easy flying distance of Singapore, could cause Britain a good deal of trouble. The Japanese semi-official Domei Agency merely stated on September 21st that grave concern was felt in official circles at the menace presented by Anglo-American collaboration talks to "Japan's mastery in the Western Pacific."

It was patent that Japan's moves were more than ever co-ordinated with the activity of the Axis in Europe. Germany let it be known in Tokyo that the fate of the French colonies in the Far East must not be decided without consulting the conqueror of France. And thereupon Hitler, baffled in his first efforts to break the morale of Britain by aerial attacks and invasion threats, determined that the moment had come for a big diplomatic campaign. On September 27th Berlin announced the signature of a Ten-Year pact of mutual assistance between Germany, Italy, and Japan. Article 1 of the Pact declared that "Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in the establishment of a New Order in Europe." Article 2 contained the counterpart of this undertaking, providing for German-Italian support for Japanese policy in Asia. The all-important Article 3 was the specific pledge of assistance "if one of the parties should be attacked by a Power not at present involved in the European war or in the Sino-Japanese conflict." And, finally, in Article 5 there was a solemn affirmation that "the aforesaid terms do not in any way affect the political status which exists

at present as between each of the three contracting parties and Soviet Russia."

Ribbentrop, German Foreign Minister, delivered himself of a truculent commentary, the most important passage of which ran as follows :

" . . . The determination of the German Government to assure to their people their rights of existence within a suitable living-space coincided with that of other nations which had also been denied their rightful place in the world. But international warmongers had succeeded in plunging Europe into a new war which Germany had not desired. A situation which had become impossible was now breaking down under the blows dealt by the nations which were attacked—great nations which now intended finally and definitely to secure equality of rights by virtue of the highest of all earthly rights. . . . The Pact I have just signed constitutes a solemn affirmation of partnership in a changing world . . . also a military alliance between three of the mightiest States of the world . . . its main purpose is to restore peace to the world as quickly as possible. Every State, therefore, which meets this *bloc* in the desire to make its own contribution to the restoration of peace will be sincerely and gratefully welcomed, and will be invited to co-operate in the political and economic reorganization of the world."

Ciano voiced identical sentiments in a minor key. Statements from Tokyo made it clear that the purpose was primarily to intimidate the U.S.A., so that Japan might finish off the China affair unhindered. At the same time broad hints were thrown out that Soviet Russia, now at last the bugbear of having to fight for her existence on two fronts had taken shape, would have to be sensible and make the best terms she could with Japan in respect of her Far Eastern interests.

The effect of this Pact was the very opposite of that intended by its authors. So far from being intimidated, the Washington Administration redoubled its efforts to supply indispensable aid to those nations fighting the battle of democracy. And one of the President's first acts was to authorize the issue of a loan and further credits to China. In London, moreover, it was at last recognized that "appeasement" in the Far East was a policy as discredited as it was in Europe. Britain's leaders had no longer any doubts about the wisdom—and indeed the necessity—of parallel action with the U.S.A. to meet the challenge of Japan's ambitious Pacific programme.

Germany had failed in her principal object of embroiling Japan

directly in hostilities against Britain and U.S.A. She had to content herself with the hope of scoring fresh points in her war of nerves. What she had achieved was a free hand in Eastern Europe and the diplomatic isolation of the U.S.S.R. Stalin and his associates in the Kremlin did not fail to see the red light. Nothing was said, however, and the Moscow radio on September 29th, reviewing developments in Indo-China, made no mention at all of this Three-Power Pact.

With the British Government and people obstinately refusing to know when they were beaten, Hitler needed triumphs in the diplomatic field. Russia was now effectively corralled. Now was the time to get busy with the great round-up of subject States and candidates for "the new European order." From time to time the German Press had attempted to describe the new heaven on earth which Germany was offering. Politically, said one of them, it could be summed up in the one word, Peace; a continent organized from its centre as a politically membered unity, not from the standpoint of obsolete rivalries, but in order to organize the needs of nations on the *Führer* principle. Germany felt herself large, young, and powerful enough to lead and take full responsibility. In the economic sphere, said Karl Megerle in the *Borsen Zeitung* of July 14th—

"Germany offers as her contribution valuable markets, just prices, stable currency, safeguards against economic crises, and an economic system free from capitalist domination . . . . Every State can take part on a basis of equality, because this system accepts as fundamental facts labour, efficiency, and production instead of the possession of gold and capital. . . ."

It sounded plausible enough, and Dr. Schacht and the new German Minister of Economics, Herr Funk, were known to have worked out elaborate plans for putting the policy into effect. But those countries that had already come under the German yoke could tell a different story—of all peoples except the Nazi-picked Germans being treated as helots in a new slave-polity. Poland, in particular, which had lost its special status of Governor-Generalship on August 24th and was made a component part of the Reich, was subjected to particularly harsh treatment. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was obliged on October 1st to accept a customs and monetary union with the Reich. The States of south-eastern Europe were already bound by economic cords, and, as for the States in the West conquered by Hitler's military

machine, their story during these months was mainly characterized in the words "loot and plunder."

The first operation in the grand diplomatic offensive—which was singularly unsuccessful—occupying the period from the middle of September to the middle of November, was the invitation of Señor Serrano Suñer, Spanish Minister of the Interior, said to be very pro-Axis in his sympathies, to Berlin and to Rome. The official commentary in Berlin claimed that Spain was among the States adhering to the new (German) type of European solidarity. Señor Suñer's own declarations are worth quoting as a commentary on General Franco's frank admission of "our common ideals" when accepting from the German Ambassador the Grand Cross in Gold of the Order of Merit of the German Eagle a week or two before. Señor Suñer announced that his country

"has repelled those who formerly attempted to be her masters and she is now free. She has her mission in the new European order. . . . In the hour when Spain seeks associates she turns to countries which are victims of the same injustices as she has suffered. . . . The natural aspirations of Spain are derived from tradition and her geographical position between two continents. In Europe Spain has no demands to make, since that word cannot be applied to the 'restitutions' which are her due. At the right moment General Franco will give the order for action."

The Spanish Foreign Minister had two interviews with Hitler, and it is reasonable to suppose that the latter broached the question of German troops being allowed passage through Spain when the moment came for active intervention by Germany in the Mediterranean mischief, which was the next step in the Axis programme. It seems, nevertheless, that Señor Suñer could not promise that German troops would have an easy passage; and in fact was altogether non-committal. So it was necessary for the *Führer* to make contact with the *Generalísimo* himself. A month later Hitler, breaking his rule of summoning others to his presence, deigned to make a journey to the Franco-Spanish frontier and had a conversation at Hendaye with General Franco. The only positive result of the Suñer visit was his appointment on October 17th as Foreign Minister, replacing the more cautious Colonel Beigbeder.

In the meantime British diplomacy had been exerting itself to restrain Spain's Government from any rash undertaking by the time-honoured expedient of financial pressure. Under the various Agreements by which Britain promised to relax the blockade, Spain was able to acquire

necessary stocks of oil and wheat, without which, indeed, the outlook for her people was indeed grim. In his speech of October 8th, moreover, Mr. Churchill went out of his way to speak honeyed words. After the conventional references to Spain as a friendly country—which the uncompromising anti-British tone of the Spanish Press sadly belied—he declared :

“ Far be it from us to lap Spain and her economic needs in the compass of our blockade. All that we need is that she shall not become a channel of supply to our mortal foes. . . . British interests and British policy are based on nothing but the independence of Spain.”

Hitler was not asking for any formal Spanish intervention on the side of the Axis. He realized perfectly well that if Spain were a declared enemy, Britain might be presented with a field of operations from which his whole Continental system could be shattered, as Napoleon's was. Hence the frank references in a German financial organ, the *Bankarchiv*, to the exhausted state of the country. There was enough latent hostility to the régime, moreover—not all Republicans were in exile or in prison—to make it unsafe to risk a renewal of the civil war. When he saw General Franco he may well have told him straight out that at present a belligerent Spain would be more of a liability than a help. And, as news of the Battle of Britain percolated through, no doubt it gave a fillip to the anti-German feeling which was growing, as a result of the arrogant attitude of many of the numerous Germans established in Spain. Hitler was quite prepared to make reckless promises for the future. A visit by General Varela, Spain's Minister of War, and his staff to Spanish possessions in West Africa (Ifni and the Canaries) at this time strengthened the impression that what General Franco and his “ Empire-building ” zealots were hoping for was the gift of a portion of the Atlantic part of French Morocco connecting the Spanish Protectorate with the colony of Rio de Oro and forming a compact wedge with the Canaries. This, together with Tangier and Gibraltar, would be no mean harvest.

The chief prize on which Hitler had set his heart, obviously, was the French Navy—deprived by the British action of its principal capital ships but still powerful enough to play a useful part in Axis designs on the Mediterranean and on Atlantic shipping. It was therefore to further browbeating of France that he now directed his attention. Courtesy required that there should first of all be consultations with the junior

partner of the Axis. And so on October 4th Hitler and Ribbentrop met Mussolini and Ciano at the Brenner Pass. (Field-Marshal Keitel, head of the German staff, was in attendance.) Except for a four hours' conversation at Munich on June 18th to settle the armistice terms for France, this was the first meeting between the two dictators since they had concerted plans, likewise at the Brenner, in the middle of March for the offensive, diplomatic and military, in Western Europe.

On October 22nd Hitler received M. Laval, vice-premier in the Pétain Government, in Paris. Two days later the war-lord had the satisfaction of receiving Marshal Pétain himself in full-dress uniform in his armoured train in occupied territory, and not long afterwards it was officially announced at Vichy that the two heads of State had agreed "in principle on collaboration on the means of reconstructing peace in Europe." M. Laval was then appointed Foreign Minister so that he could continue to work out the details of this "collaboration" for which he had been steadily working, while M. Baudouin, no less committed to the policy of "loyalty towards our conquerors," became Secretary of State, attached to the presidency of the Council. Vichy Government spokesmen informed the Press that no criticism of the collaboration policy could be permitted.

By this time public opinion in France had recovered somewhat from the mood of defeatism and bewilderment of the summer, and while the prestige of Marshal Pétain himself still stood high, there was growing resentment against the intriguers around him, and, what is more, a definite swing-over to a belief in an ultimate British victory. Mr. Churchill's powerful broadcast to the French people on October 21st exactly caught the prevailing French mood. Neither this, however, nor a direct appeal from King George VI and an admonitory message from President Roosevelt, could prevent Marshal Pétain from pledging his country to "collaboration." The Marshal took it upon himself to explain to the nation, in a broadcast from Lyons on October 30th, why he had made himself personally responsible for this policy.

"It is with honour and to maintain French unity that I enter to-day the path of collaboration," he said, so that "the load of suffering of our country may be lightened, the lot of our prisoners be improved, the burden of occupation expenses lessened, the line of demarcation rendered more flexible and the provisioning of the territory facilitated. This collaboration must be sincere. All thought of aggression must be excluded from it.



M. Laval



An armistice, after all, is not peace. France has numerous obligations towards the victor. At any rate she remains sovereign. This sovereignty imposes upon her the obligation to defend her soil. To erase divergencies of opinion, to subdue dissensions in the colonies—this is my policy. The Ministers are responsible only to me and to me alone. And history shall judge. Until now I have spoken to you as a father—to-day I speak to you as a Leader. Follow me. Keep your trust in eternal France."

It was a pathetic utterance, only to be interpreted as "a second capitulation."<sup>1</sup> General de Gaulle's headquarters in London had already issued their reply to this shameful admission of impotence. From Leopoldville, in the Belgian Congo, which he was then visiting, the General—whose movement had been making gradual, though not spectacular headway—issued a clarion call, proclaiming a Council of Defence of the Empire, to which all Frenchmen were invited to adhere "as long as the French Government and a representation of the French people do not exist normally and independently from the enemy," this new Council to exercise all powers formerly performed by the Chief of State and Council of Ministers—in consonance with the laws existing in France on June 23rd, 1940.

It soon became clear, however, that nothing very concrete had been yet agreed upon—Hitler still saw great advantages in continuing his cat-and-mouse tactics. M. Laval made a statement to the Press in Paris on October 31st, explaining that progress was likely to be slow while military operations continued, but France was now drawing up an answer to a questionnaire on colonial and economic co-operation which the Germans had put forward. Ten days later he issued an official Note, after a conversation with Göring, that there would be no negotiations for a definite peace settlement until the war with Britain was ended. Thus, though there was wild speculation, the world was none the wiser as to Hitler's intentions with France, and the fate of the French Navy was still left in the air. The chief effect of the Hitler-Pétain interview had been, indeed, to provoke hostile reactions throughout France, which were intensified when it became known that Germany was calmly deporting Frenchmen in trainloads from Lorraine to make room for huge industrial plants that could operate with greater safety than in Western Germany which was being devastated by Royal Air Force bombers night after night.

<sup>1</sup> *France*—the organ published in French in London on behalf of Free France.

Indeed, the meeting with Pétain represented the high-water-mark of Nazi diplomatic achievement. The journeyings went on, but from the last week in October the story is one of disappointment. In the "new deal" which Hitler now had in mind, involving France and Spain, it looked rather as if Italy was going to be left out in the cold. Consequently Mussolini pressed for another meeting, and Hitler and his Foreign Minister went to Florence on October 28th. What passed between the two dictators on this occasion has not become known. But on that same day Italy sent an ultimatum to Greece.

She invoked the trifling pretext of incidents in Albania and, without waiting for an answer, began to wage war on Greece with the forces she had massed months previously in Albania. The story of that campaign will be related in another section of this History, as also the course of events in Italy. All that concerns us here is to consider the effects of Italy's poor showing and the triumphs of Greek arms, with valuable aid by sea and in the air from Britain, on the position in south-eastern Europe and indeed on the whole plan of grand strategy which looked so promising in the middle of October.

The plan was evidently—when the failure of the direct assault on the British Isles became manifest—a vast enveloping movement to make Britain's position in the Mediterranean untenable. Pressure was to be applied simultaneously at both ends of the Middle Sea. The intrigues with regard to Spain and Morocco and the assistance which Hitler was confidently expecting from "captive" France have been mentioned. In south-eastern Europe the Axis had already numerous *points d'appui*. Roumania, after the abdication of King Carol, fell entirely under the domination of the Iron Guard. The state of anarchy which developed in that country could be made to serve Hitler's purposes; in any case, to prepare for a possible military parade to the Black Sea, on October 7th German troops in considerable strength, including motorized forces, were sent into Roumania "to assist in training the Roumanian Army and be generally helpful in the country's reconstruction." Yugo-Slavia, now three parts encircled, could do little but conform to Hitler's New Order—and hope to avoid actually becoming a battlefield. With Bulgaria the situation was more complicated. German influence in military circles was considerable, and through the stranglehold which she had acquired over Bulgaria's trade, Germany might well expect that this country's formal adherence to the Axis was only a question of time. At the end of October, by a fresh economic and financial agreement, Bulgarian

trade was specifically restricted to Germany and occupied countries, while Herr Rust, German Minister of Education, went to Sofia to see to "cultural relations." The under-current of pro-Russian feeling, however, particularly among the masses of the peasantry, was working against Hitler, and King Boris, playing his cards astutely, managed to maintain his Government's policy of keeping out of the war. Having retained a healthy respect for Britain and being determined that under his guidance Bulgaria should not this time back the wrong horse, as his father King Ferdinand had done in the war of 1914-18, he temporized successfully—and in the middle of November made a secret visit to Germany and called on Hitler at Berchtesgaden, instead of waiting to be summoned and browbeaten like so many leaders of the small States. Hitler was particularly anxious to have the use of Bulgarian territory for his ambitious aims, which now extended to Palestine and Iraq—in order to secure much-needed oil. German help was discreetly offered for obtaining from Greece satisfaction of the Bulgarian claim to an outlet on the Aegean at Dedeagatch, but King Boris and his coadjutors at that time were proof even against this temptation.

It was Turkey, however, that dominated the situation in this part of the world—that could make or mar Hitler's plans in the Balkans and beyond. And, as the annual speech of the President at the opening of the Grand National Assembly on November 1st made plain, Turkey had no intention of departing from her attitude of non-belligerency, with a bias in favour of Great Britain, with whom she had a formal treaty. This speech, which was awaited with some anxiety, also seemed to dispose of the idea that Turkey's relations with Soviet Russia had been infected by the poison of German propaganda.

Since the announcement of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Pact the Soviet Government had been lying very low. It could not but view with dis-taste Germany's fastening grip on the Balkans and the underlying threat to Turkey and the Straits. Wild rumours were circulated that Russia would be ready to come to an understanding with Germany for some sort of condominium in the Dardanelles region and the Near Eastern territories which were on the Berlin-Baghdad route. From her decision to participate in the special Danube Conference at Bucharest on October 28th, at which the International and European Commissions of the Danube were wound up and replaced by a new Commission excluding Britain, the conclusion was drawn that she was prepared to accept the consequences deriving from her weakness *vis à vis* Germany and to some

extent to enter into Germany's schemes for her "New Order." To that extent the U.S.S.R. was making the best of a bad job. At the same time little progress was made towards better relations with Britain. The trade agreement, which Sir Stafford Cripps had hoped to secure, was still hanging fire, the Soviet Government still expressing resentment at the high-handed action of Britain in "freezing" the balances held in British banks for the credit of the Governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, whose new Soviet-inspired "People's" Governments still went unrecognized by us.

When M. Molotov at length accepted the pressing invitation from Berlin for a formal return visit (to the Ribbentrop visit to Moscow at which the Russo-German Pact had been signed) it seemed that the pessimists would be proved right. He left Moscow on November 10th with an imposing suite. The Germans let it be known that this was the crowning feature of Hitler's diplomatic strategy and talked of "a world front against England." Two days later, however, M. Molotov departed, with all his accompanying delegates. The Soviet Government has preserved complete silence as to what was agreed upon, but it would not appear to have amounted to very much, possibly nothing more than closer collaboration in economic matters, so that Russia might serve for Germany as a vast reserve of armament factories and raw material supplies, much as the U.S.A. and the countries of the New World do for Britain.

Thus, on paper, Germany's domination of the Continent was almost complete, and by her agreements with Japan and Soviet Russia she appeared to have gone a long way towards isolating Britain as an alternative—or preliminary—to the much-vaunted invasion. But Hitler reckoned without the weakness of his ally, Mussolini, and the consummate ability with which Britain, using her traditional weapon of sea power, could turn to advantage that weakness. Instead of intimidating or overrunning Greece the Italian forces were beaten and harried in a series of encounters, and within twenty-three days a Greek spokesman was able to inform the press that the Greek Army, fighting an army six times its size, with a powerful air force and plenty of war material, had "purged the last corner of Greek soil profaned by Italian Fascism." British aircraft under the Middle East command were a potent factor in Greece's unexpected military success. British troops landed in Crete on November 4th, and other Greek islands were also taken over, so that now Britain had outwitted Hitler's stratagems and possessed a base of operations on the

Continent. A series of successful naval operations, culminating in "a crippling blow," in Mr. Churchill's words, at the Italian fleet in Taranto harbour put an entirely new complexion on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. And meanwhile, after a visit to Cairo by Mr. Eden, Minister of War, General Wavell, C.-in-C. of the Middle East forces, was getting ready to pass to the offensive. On November 15th he paid a visit to Crete, and presumably the last finishing touches were put to the plan for concerted operations. Britain was thus fulfilling with some effect her guarantee to Greece; and this definite check to Hitler's triumphal progress put new heart into those States such as Turkey and Egypt which had signed treaties of alliance with Britain. (The Egyptian Prime Minister, Hassan Sabry Pasha, died suddenly on November 14th and was succeeded by the former Minister of Public Works and Commerce, Hussein Sirry Pasha, an engineer not belonging to any political party.) There was great enthusiasm in Egypt for the Greek cause. As the news of Greek victories—and later British sweeping successes in Africa—spread throughout the Balkans (despite the Axis clamp upon the press) there was a noticeable change in the atmosphere. Hitler's mustering for his "new order" became reduced to a pact, subsidiary to the Three-Power Pact, signed at Vienna on November 20th by three States that were already bound hand-and-foot to the Axis, Hungary, Roumania, and Slovakia. Hitler had failed in his efforts to extrude Britain and British influence from Europe. Diplomacy having broken down, he was concentrating once again, when the period closes, on breathing fire and slaughter about invasion by air and sea to wipe out this island of ours that dared to stand in the way of Germany's mission of world domination.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE EMPIRE MOBILIZES

By H. V. HODSON AND COLIN WILLS

ALTHOUGH the sinister shadow of Hitlerism on the march had darkened every continent of the world, when war came in 1939 the British Dominions were relatively unprepared, both physically and morally, compared with the United Kingdom. Even more drastically than she, they had disarmed after their tremendous military efforts of the last world war ; and although, like her, they had all launched programmes of rearmament to meet the rising menace of Nazi aggression, none of them, in September 1939, could have been said to be "fighting fit." None of them then had a trained Army capable of immediately forming an expeditionary force. Each of them had an Air Force, formidable in the quality of its personnel and its potential strength, but still inadequate, both in size and in equipment, for participation in a great world war. Canada had a tiny Navy for her coastal defence ; New Zealand maintained a light-cruiser squadron of the Royal Navy ; Australia possessed a small fleet of her own, headed by three modern cruisers. These last two units were perhaps the only fully prepared contributions, in the form of mobile armed strength, that the Dominions were able to present immediately to the common pool of imperial defence.

But mobile units do not make up the whole story. The local national defence of the Dominions and their dependencies, which they themselves had entirely undertaken, was, and still remains, a vital contribution to the defence of the British Commonwealth as a whole. The Dominions maintained naval bases, or defended naval stations, priceless to the operations of the Royal Navy : Simonstown, the great naval base in South Africa, Durban, Darwin, Sydney, Melbourne, Wellington, Esquimalt, Halifax. More generally, the Dominions represented safe and separate sources of material and military strength, able, not merely to add to a joint striking force, but also, if need be, to act independently in offence or defence. Each of the Dominions, as part of its rearmament plans,

had been developing its power to support itself and even its neighbours in the mechanical requirements of modern war—guns, munitions, and even aeroplanes. The Dominions' industrial strength had grown tremendously since 1914. It had become a vital part of their contribution to victory.

The people of the Dominions also lagged behind the people of Great Britain in their mental preparedness for war. They were far away from the aggressor countries. They could not see with their own eyes, across barricaded frontiers or narrow channels, the destruction and repression of nations, races, and political minorities. It was all very hazy in the distance. They had no direct pledges of their own to defend particular foreign countries, having been specifically excluded from Britain's undertakings at Locarno and later. Their public opinion still looked upon the League of Nations as a means of saving them from war rather than a means of enrolling them, with other nations of good-will, into a grand alliance for war against an aggressive Great Power. For years, through boom and slump and boom, their eyes were turned mainly upon the problems of their own internal economies and social progress. Moreover, they were very jealous of their national independence in foreign policy and defence, as established by one Imperial Conference after another, and they resented any suggestion that they were to be drawn along at the coat-tails of Great Britain.

In all these circumstances, it was not unreasonable to expect that the Dominions would be reluctant to join Great Britain in the war against Nazi Germany. One member-nation of the British Commonwealth, indeed—Eire—at once chose the path of neutrality, with the assent of by far the majority of her people. Whatever British people may think of this decision, any other would undoubtedly have provoked a grave internal crisis in Eire, which might well have been a greater handicap to Britain's war effort, in the long run, than the attitude actually adopted.

In South Africa a strange situation developed. The Prime Minister, General Hertzog, presented his Cabinet and later Parliament with an address calling for South Africa's neutrality, combined with continued respect both for her membership of the British Commonwealth and for her undertakings in regard to Simonstown and coastal defence—undertakings which would have made her, in effect, un-neutral. This proposal was vigorously opposed by the section of the Cabinet, headed by General Smuts, which represented the old South African Party element in the United Party. The Union Parliament rejected General Hertzog's address

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and adopted General Smuts's amendment by 80 votes to 67. The minority consisted of 29 Nationalists under the leadership of Dr. Malan, and 37 United Party members ; the majority consisted of 65 members of the United Party, 7 of the Dominion Party, 4 of the Labour Party, and the 3 representatives of the natives. The Governor-General refused General Hertzog's request for a dissolution of Parliament, and General Smuts thereupon formed a Government, pledged to engage in the war against Germany, and including members of all three parties supporting him.

There was one important qualification in South Africa's military share in the war. The Union Defence Act allowed troops to be used anywhere in "southern Africa," and General Smuts did not propose to extend this sphere of potential operations. That is to say, the Union barred herself from sending an expeditionary force to Europe. Nor did General Smuts, at that time, favour South Africans' going overseas independently to enlist in the British forces, though a number were already serving in the Royal Air Force, and many more were to join them later. The policy adopted was that South Africa's part in the war, for the time being at least, should be to defend her own territories, partly by helping to defend those of her immediate neighbours.

In New Zealand a Labour Government was in power—a Government which had shown itself not only devoted to Socialist ideals, but also ready and competent to impose radical Socialist legislation. The fundamental Socialist hostility to war, to Capitalism and to Imperialism, might perhaps have been expected, on the surface, to make the New Zealand Government unwilling to enter war at the side of "Imperialist Capitalist England," as she was so often described in the international literature of the Left. There had already been inevitable disputes between the two Governments over economic and financial matters. There was a natural antagonism between the supporters of New Zealand Labour and a great body of Conservative opinion in England. But, in fact, these conflicts played no part in the Dominion's judgment upon the war situation. As idealists, the New Zealand Socialists recognized that, whatever issue of power politics might be involved in the European struggle, victory for Germany would mean victory for a political philosophy dedicated to the destruction of individual liberty. As realists, they recognized that to make common cause with Great Britain was their country's only hope of survival. Their only doubts and hesitations were based on the inadequacy of their means of



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action. Though New Zealand had been foremost in demanding that the League of Nations should adopt a militant line, and had pledged herself to the concept of an international police force, she had, in fact, little or nothing ready and prepared to contribute to the common pool of mutual defence. The New Zealand Parliament voted unanimously for participation in the war. The Government telegraphed to the British Government expressing agreement with the declaration of war, which they regarded as an action "inevitably forced upon the British Commonwealth in the cause of justice, freedom, and democracy." Mr. Michael Savage, the Prime Minister, said: "The cause is worth the sacrifice."

The Labour Party in Australia has an ancient and deeply cherished tradition of isolationism and opposition to war, and particularly to sending troops to fight overseas. It was not so long ago that Mr. Joseph Lyons, the previous Prime Minister, who sprang from the Labour Party, though he took office as a United Australia Party leader, had declared that Australia had a better purpose in life for her young men than the battle-fields of Europe. But if isolation was a fond dream of some Australians, all Australians realized that it was not a practical possibility. Immediately Britain declared war, the Australian Cabinet met, and after a short consultation the Prime Minister, Mr. Robert Menzies, broadcast to the nation announcing that Australia, too, was at war.

The Labour Party leader, Mr. Curtin, declared that Labour would give the Government full support, subject to the maintenance of the rights of the people. The third party, the Country Party, also supported the Government's action, and the people entered the war united in their main purpose.

The outbreak found Canada divided on foreign policy. The isolationist section there was not only numerous, but also able to back its ideals with a more forceful argument than the isolationists in any other Dominion could employ. That argument was the nearness and promised protection of the United States. The United States clearly could not afford to allow Canada to be invaded by an aggressive ambitious foreign Power, as President Roosevelt had bluntly said not long before. Therefore, the Canadian isolationists argued, Canada was safe, and should not sacrifice her manhood and her wealth in fighting a European war. A section of the French-Canadian population opposed Canada's taking part in the war, largely on the ground that successful large-scale war must mean conscription, which they were determined to reject.

There was, however, a general recognition of the over-riding need for

national unity. Already, on September 1st, 1939, Parliament had approved certain defensive measures. On September 4th, the day after Britain's declaration of war, Mr. Mackenzie King, the Liberal Prime Minister, addressed the House and urged that Canada should enter the war so as to "bequeath to future generations the liberties and institutions that others had built up." Three days later, when Parliament met again, it met not to approve an inevitable entry into the war, but to make its own decisions. Mr. Mackenzie King appealed for consent to Canada's full co-operation with Great Britain. His undertaking that there would be no conscription was designed to cement national unity by reassuring the French-Canadians and the other groups of isolationists. One of the greatest and most powerful speeches in favour of war was made by the leading French-Canadian member of his Cabinet, Mr. Lapointe. The Conservative opposition, under Dr. Manion, pledged its full support. Mr. Raymond spoke for the dissenting group of French-Canadians, but his amendment modifying the Government's plan was not sufficiently supported to call for a vote. Canada was at war.

Canada's decision was beyond doubt the most significant event of all these decisions in the Parliaments of the Commonwealth. For the isolationist argument held good: Canada could have stayed out—and stayed out safely, so far as the immediate future was concerned. The decision, therefore, was a proof that Canada did not believe that isolation could endure, or that safety could endure, even across the Atlantic, if Britain were defeated by Germany. It was a testimony to the belief that the danger to democracy was a common danger, and the cause of civilization a common cause.

Thus it was that the four overseas Dominions entered the war. They entered the war deliberately. They were not dragged into it. The Statute of Westminster had given them free choice, and of their own free will they elected to fight Germany.

The Colonial Empire, comprising more than fifty separately governed Dependencies, was automatically bound in law by the British declaration of war. The instant reaction of its peoples showed that it was equally bound in spirit. Through its local self-governing bodies, through its free press, through its chieftains and public leaders, the whole Colonial Empire showed that it shared Britain's determination to fight and to win. This support was not limited to resolutions and fine words. Gifts of money and goods began pouring in, and the produce of the Colonial Dependencies was taken into the new organization of the Empire's



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resources for war. Everywhere there was anxiety to play a more active part, as indeed fell later to the lot of some of the Colonies.

In India the situation was complex and difficult. India was in a transitional stage of her development as a self-governing nation. Of the great Act of 1935, the provincial part had gone into force, and within their own field of powers Provincial Governments, responsible to elected Parliaments, ruled the country. The federal part of the new constitution, however, had not yet gone into operation, and the Central Government remained, in the last resort, in the hands of the Viceroy, responsible to the Secretary of State for India in London. The Central Government's powers, moreover, included those of defence and foreign policy. It was therefore held that, in spite of the advanced progress of India towards the status of a self-governing Dominion, she was automatically committed to war by the British decision, and her defence plans for war action went immediately into force.

Later, in protest against these events, the Ministries formed by the Congress Party in eight of the eleven provinces resigned, the Governors taking over their powers. In the Punjab, however, from which the bulk of the Indian Army is recruited, the Government under Sir Sikander Hyat Khan remained in office pledged to full co-operation in the war. The martial classes and the ruling princes rallied to the fighting cause. Moreover, in every party and community in India, including the Congress Party, there was a detestation of Nazi tyranny and ambition which overruled the temptation to make political capital out of the circumstances. While asking for a larger and more rapid increase of national self-government than—in view of the grave differences between Hindus and Moslems and other dangerous factors—Great Britain was at this juncture prepared to give, India was solid in its will to overthrow Herr Hitler and his works. There was no obstruction to the effort to make India's best contribution to victory, but on the contrary, willing help from India's many races.

The nations of the Commonwealth were not prepared for war, in the German sense. They were civilized communities living civilized lives, not robot States dedicating every effort to converting themselves into engines of war. This is, and must always be, a heavy military disadvantage. The farmer busy in his fields, the townsman at his craft,<sup>a</sup> always been at a disadvantage compared with the predator<sup>b</sup> lurking in the hills, living only for war and plunder, waiting h swoop down on them. But would anyone say that all men

lived as bandits, in order not to be at a military disadvantage? Despite this handicap, the men of peace have in the end kept the world against the bandits. For when the man of peace draws the sword, he has something to fight for more precious than glory or plunder, and he fights with a spirit that no bandit can ever match or withstand.

When the British nations entered this war, the spirit of the men of peace rising to arms was manifest once more. Their "mental unpreparedness" disappeared. It was replaced by a conviction that war against the Nazis was inevitable, and that the British peoples, standing together and putting forth all their efforts, were assured of victory. As for material unpreparedness, that could not be remedied in a day. But it was relative, not absolute. In the years immediately preceding the war, and notably since the crisis of September 1938, Dominion defence preparations had been accelerated. Although at the outbreak of war no great bulk of trained man-power or material power had been built up by any of the Dominions, each of them had already an organization for building up such strength and a gathering momentum in that direction.

In Australia, the Air Force had already begun work on a plan for expansion based on the recommendations of Sir John Salmond, who had not long before visited Australia as a special adviser. This expansion was immediately accelerated. A squadron of Sunderland flying-boats which Australia had ordered from Britain was at once handed over to Britain along with an Australian nucleus of personnel, and a full squadron of Australian airmen later came over to man them. At the same time, many Australians joined the Royal Air Force independently.

Munition manufacture, long established in Australia, was built up by a brilliant piece of rapid planning and executive work into a great industry contributing very substantially to the Empire's war needs. Even more notable was the instant acceleration of the development of Australian aircraft manufacture. This industry had been in existence only a few months, yet by November 1939 it was already at pressure on a building plan that included numbers of training aircraft, a steady line of "Wirraway" fighters, and a regular output of the fast all-metal two-engined Beaufort bombers.

The Australian Army organization was based on the maintenance of a small cadre of regulars and a national militia, training for which was compulsory. Within two months of the outbreak of war, 80,000 militiamen were in camp, and schemes were completed to provide for the widest expansion of the new Army should the course of the war require it.

The Royal Australian Navy had been adding to its small but efficient forces. During the few years immediately before the war, Australia had bought from Britain three modern cruisers. Many light auxiliary craft had also been bought or built. Three new destroyers of the Tribal class were building in Australia, seven mine-sweepers had been laid down, and a flotilla of fast motor-torpedo boats was ordered. On the outbreak of war, the personnel of the Royal Australian Navy was doubled, bringing it up to 11,807. The Australian fleet immediately took on its share of escort, patrol, and other work in co-operation with the Royal Navy.

New Zealand had also taken steps to strengthen her defences. The coastal defences had just been reorganized. An Air Force had been created only a few years before the war, and its development was stepped up to the limit on the outbreak of war. Four hundred New Zealanders immediately left to join the Royal Air Force.

New Zealand had no Navy of her own, but maintained and manned the New Zealand division of the Royal Navy, consisting of the two 7,000-ton cruisers *Achilles* and *Leander*. On the outbreak of war, New Zealand doubled the strength of her naval personnel by calling up the reserves, and ordered both the cruisers into active service. The *Achilles* was sent to the South Atlantic, where she took a gallant part in the successful action of the River Plate against the German battleship *Graf Spee*.

Canada's Navy was a small-ship force designed for coastal defence. But it immediately became a vital factor in the war by undertaking the protection of the Western bridgeheads of the great Atlantic sea-roads by which so much of Britain's war supplies must travel. The Royal Canadian Navy consisted of a 2,000-ton flotilla leader, six modern destroyers, and five mine-sweepers, but on the outbreak of war forty more vessels were requisitioned for mine-sweeping and patrol work, and plans were put in hand for the provision of many fast light craft to supplement the existing patrol forces. The personnel, 2,300, was doubled by calling up the reserves. Canada also decided to raise a military force for overseas service, and to enlist and train Air Force personnel on a large scale.

South Africa decided to concentrate primarily on the defence of its own territory. But this defence in itself constituted an important contribution to the defence of the Empire as a whole. An enemy established in the south of Africa could easily attack most of the British Colonies by air, and some by land; conversely, in the event of attack on British zones in other parts of Africa, the enemy would welcome weakness in the

south and fear strength there. The ports of South Africa, furthermore, are axial points on the Empire's sea communications. It was here the Union's co-operation was of immediate and invaluable assistance to the Empire.

Besides immediately assuring the land defence of the British naval base at Simonstown, according to its contractual obligations, the Union Government put its own seaward defence organization into active operation. Powerful shore batteries were manned on a war footing, South African patrol craft took up watch over the coasts and the nearer sea-ways, and the South African Air Force began a continuous sea patrol in co-operation with the Royal Navy.

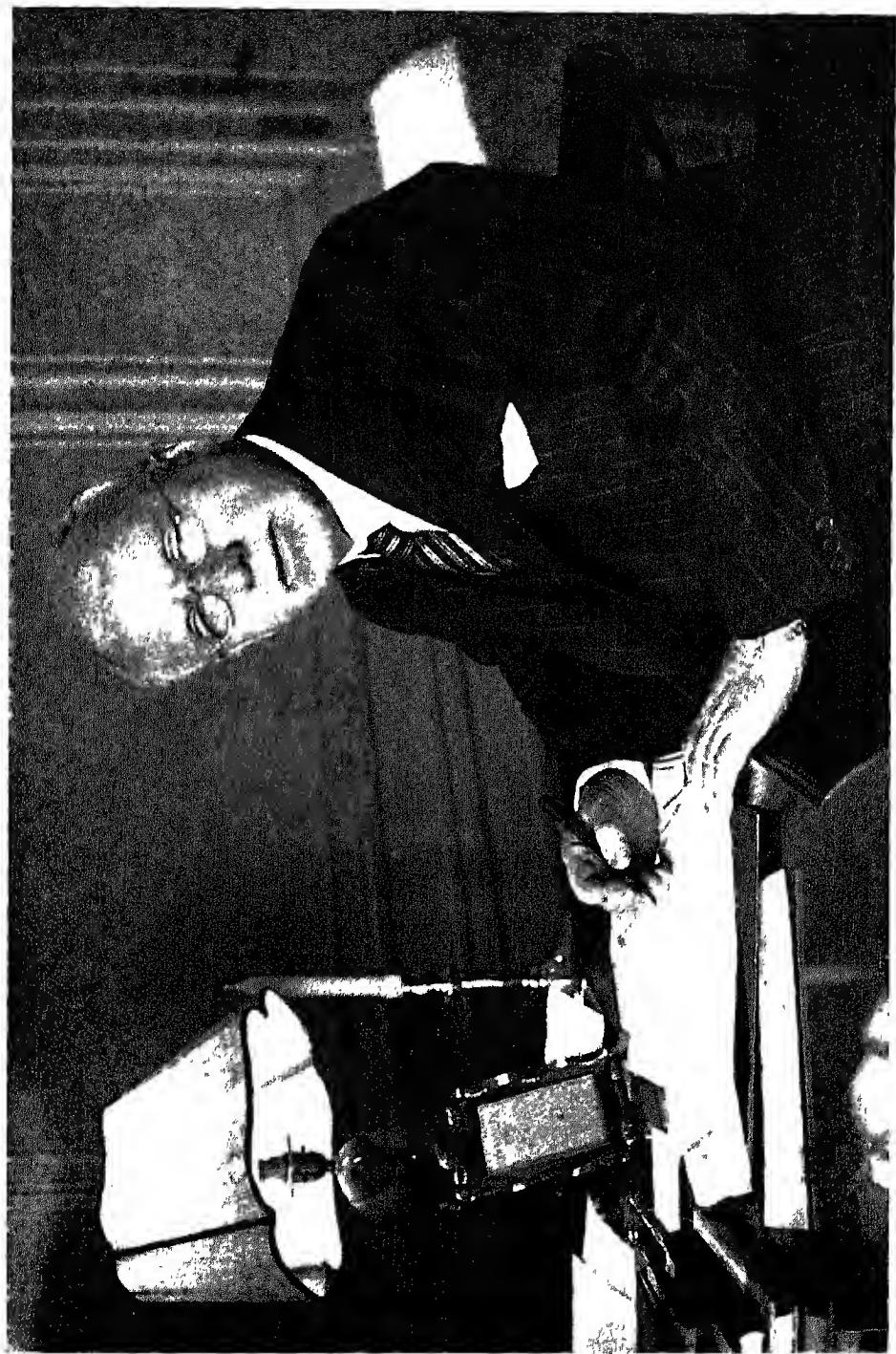
The outbreak of war found India well prepared for her own defence, and able to contribute considerable strength to the general effort. The efficiency of the Indian Army needs no recalling ; nor was there any doubt about its enthusiasm for the Allied cause. In the parts of India populated by martial races there was immediate eagerness to join up.

India was also developing air-mindedness, and had a young Air Force of her own. There were already Indian pilots in the Royal Air Force, and others at once joined it.

The six largest vessels of the Royal Indian Navy were at once attached to the East Indies command of the Royal Navy, and commenced a gallant and valuable service. From the outbreak of war onward, they were constantly on patrol in all weathers in the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and the monsoon-swept Indian Ocean. Their work in keeping the vital sea routes safe won the highest praise from British naval officers. But other Indian sailors were also serving the Empire on all the seas of the world—and were to figure in many heroic episodes of the war. These were the lascars in ships of the British merchant marine.

It will thus be seen that the Empire countries' first participation in the war was predominantly naval. New Zealanders won the first Dominion battle honours at the River Plate, but, all round the world, ships and men of the Dominions set forth to guard the seas. Canadians and Newfoundlanders patrolled the grey North Atlantic. Where the Atlantic meets the Indian Ocean, South African seamen and airmen kept watch by night and day. Australia's territories extend from the Equator to the Antarctic, from the coral islands of the South Seas to the pearl-beds of the Indian Ocean, and over all this vast zone the Australian Navy kept ward, as well as helping to protect the Empire's communications.

It was inevitable, in the nature of things, that the Dominions' first



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work in the war should be to assure communications, and thus to hold the Empire together as a highly organized co-operative unit. For in that co-operation and that unity lies the Empire's strength, both in peace and in war, and two of Germany's prime aims were to sunder the unity of the British nations and to hamper their co-operation.

But immediate naval action, and the enlistment of thousands of men from the Empire in the fighting forces of Britain, were merely a beginning. Dominions, Colonies, and India were all to take a much greater part in the war effort.

We have seen how the nations of the British Commonwealth made their individual decisions about going to war, and how they went to war. After decision and immediate action came the phase of planning. It was not enough to decide to be in the war, not enough to do what could be done at once. The nations now had to make their plans for prolonged and unlimited effort. They had to design their part of the campaign, and to mobilize for it.

In every case, this planning involved three elements—actual martial participation, supply of munitions and war materials, and contribution to the economic strength of the Empire.

The first of these elements presented a complex problem. In the first place, it was not certain, at that stage, to what extent the man-power of the Empire countries would be needed for expeditionary forces. In the second place, there was some reason to think that more men would be needed for home defence, at least in some countries, than had been the case in the previous war. And in the third place, modern war had so revolutionized military values that it was evident that many an individual, or even a whole community, might do more to win the war by staying at home and working than by going abroad and fighting.

The details of these problems and their solution, as affecting each Empire country, are not for consideration here. Facing the problem, the Empire Governments, in all the Dominions, and in several Colonies so placed as to be able to act directly, sought first to provide for the effective defence of their own territories, and then to send to the front lines and the potential front lines such forces as it was possible and advisable to send.

Canada was the first Dominion to send out an expeditionary force. The first Canadian troops landed in Britain on December 17th, 1939. A second contingent arrived at the end of the same month. By the beginning of March 1940, 70,000 Canadians were under arms in the

Active Service Force, and recruiting plans were being expanded and accelerated. By the same date, the personnel of the Royal Canadian Navy had been practically quadrupled. But the Navy's activities were still confined to Canadian waters, whereas the Army had been able to send forces to the European war zones, where their arrival had a marked moral effect, not only on the British people, but also on their enemies.

In February, a squadron of the Canadian Air Force arrived in Britain and was attached to the Royal Air Force, which already had many Canadians in its personnel.

Australia wanted to be in the fighting, too. The memory of the first A.I.F. (Australian Imperial Force) had for twenty-five years been a rich source of pride to the older people of the Commonwealth, and an inspiration to the young. It seemed to Australians a fitting adornment of their tradition that their second A.I.F. should be appointed to serve in the region where the first A.I.F. had originally made its name—in the Middle East. To Egypt first, and then on to Palestine, the new Australian army journeyed, recapturing the atmosphere of 1915, when the Australians camped at Mena and Heliopolis, and fought from the Canal to Damascus and beyond. Meanwhile, in Australia, the whole Army organization was rapidly overhauled, and mechanization, which had been begun long before, was applied throughout. The original plans for the A.I.F. provided for a strength of 20,000, and men between twenty and twenty-two were called up for compulsory training. Public opinion, particularly Labour opposition, did not allow of conscription for oversea service. In addition, 80,000 volunteer militiamen had already enlisted and were in training. A programme of aircraft construction was launched. Ten thousand skilled workmen were recruited to make these Australian planes.

New Zealand's initial appeal for 6,600 men for the Dominion's "first echelon" of an oversea army resulted in the full number being enlisted on the day recruiting opened. Recruiting for a second echelon began at once. A contingent was dispatched to Egypt, and the anti-tank battery recruited from New Zealanders in Britain was sent out to join this Near-East force. Over 35,000 men were also enrolled for home defence, and preparations were made for the protection of the Dominion, hitherto one of the least-armed countries of the British Commonwealth.

South Africa's first active contribution to the mobile land forces of the Empire was the formation of a Field Force, enlistment in which was



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voluntary. Earlier policy was modified to the extent that these volunteers were sworn in to serve "anywhere in Africa." It is notable that most of the volunteers, in filling in their forms, crossed out the words "in Africa," desiring to serve anywhere. Active Citizens' Defence units were also expanded, including the Highland Regiment and the South African Irish Brigade. While these forces were specifically for home defence, the Field Force was intended to defend any British possessions in Africa, or, if necessary, the Portuguese colonies to the north-east and north-west of the Union.

Besides the formation of new armies, and the dispatch of some of them to potential war zones, the expansion of the Empire's war effort involved a remarkable development of munitions production.

This development surprised even the British people. Few people, even in the Dominions themselves, realized the extent to which industry had developed its war potential, during the past twenty years, in these new lands spread round the globe. Australia had had a munitions industry of some consequence since the last war, and this industry was raised to war level in remarkably short time. Before long, Australia was making not only rifles, machine-guns, anti-tank guns, anti-aircraft guns, and field-guns, but also tanks, warships, and warplanes. In some types of munitions Australia soon became an exporter to her fellow-countries of the British Commonwealth.

Canada was industrially more advanced than any other Dominion, and well equipped to turn to the manufacture of engines of war. The close ties of her industry with United States interests were in some ways a handicap to this war-time effort, in other ways an advantage. A War Supply Board was set up, which placed all the Allied orders for munitions from Canada. Within a very short time these orders were averaging 4 million dollars weekly. Nine of the Dominion's leading industrial organizations formed a central organization for the manufacture of bombing planes at two huge new plants which were immediately started. The first order for these bombers involved spending nearly 100 million dollars. Individual manufacturers all over Canada arranged to make parts for the bombers, which were to be assembled at the central plants, fitted with British engines, and flown across the Atlantic. Fighters, too, were ordered from Canada, and the first Canadian-made Hurricane reached England on February 29th, 1940.

The British and Canadian Governments also agreed on a plan of co-operation in shipbuilding. Orders were placed with Canadian ship-

building yards for twenty-eight mine-sweepers, to cost more than £130,000 each. These figures give some idea of the range and drive of munition-making in Canada, which, with Australia, brought a great new productive power to bear on the side of the Allies. Of course this power took time to develop, and there were difficulties both in England and in the Dominions before orders became output. But the difficulties were overcome by the will to win.

The third element in the development of the Empire's war effort was the formulation of the Empire Air Training Scheme. This bold and brilliant conception was first announced by Sir Kingsley Wood in the House of Commons on December 10th, 1939. It was a plan to pool the man-power available in various parts of the Empire for the Air Forces, and to train these legions of young men in Canada under a combined scheme financed by the British Government and those of the participating Dominions. Canada was the obvious choice for the home of such a scheme. An excellent flying country, with space for numberless airfields, and industrial and transportation facilities sufficient for any calls that might be made on them, Canada had also the double geographical advantage of being near enough to Europe to get men and machines over there quickly when the scheme began to turn out its finished products, and far enough away to be completely safe from enemy interference with training. Canada also possessed direct and frequent sea communications with Australia and New Zealand, as well as with Great Britain.

Britain, with less space, and more pressure on its airfields, its industries, and its transport for urgent war needs, welcomed the opportunity to have large numbers of its Air Force men trained elsewhere, in safety and without interruption. Canada was enthusiastically in favour of the scheme, which enabled her to play a most important rôle in the war, right on her own territory. Australia and New Zealand also approved the plan, but the Union of South Africa preferred to train her own airmen locally. New Zealand arranged to give her trainees their elementary course at home, and send them to Canada for advanced training. Australia, while continuing to train many men fully, agreed to send others to Canada under the scheme. The agreement adopting the plan—designed to provide a standard of training equal to that prevailing in Britain for pilots, air-gunners, wireless operators, and observers—was signed on December 17th, exactly one week after the first announcement. In addition, the scheme provided for special schools of air armament, aeronautical engineering, administration, equipment, accountancy, and

schools for flying instructors. In all, no less than sixty-seven schools were to be established, staffed by 40,000 officers, instructors, and technicians. Eighty airfields were required, including sixty new ones.

Britain arranged to send special details of instructors, and to provide more than 1,000 training planes. Australia and New Zealand also sent instructors, and Australia offered to supply some trainer planes, which by the middle of 1940 she was manufacturing in numbers. Canada also laid down plans to build many trainer planes for the scheme. It was reckoned that over three years, 607 million dollars would be spent on the scheme.

This scheme, and other training schemes in Australia and New Zealand, will together produce 50,000 airmen a year when in full operation.

In addition to the Canadian scheme, and parallel with it, the countries of the Empire continued their individual contributions to the building up of a mighty air arm. Colonies everywhere sent men to the Royal Air Force as individual volunteers, and raised great sums of money to buy aircraft. Southern Rhodesia, with fullest British approval, started an Air Training Scheme of its own, planning to establish air schools at Salisbury, Bulawayo, and elsewhere.

The Australian Government decided to recruit 57,000 air personnel in a little over two years, of whom 14,000 would be pilots, 16,000 members of air crews, and 27,000 ground personnel. To train this great force, new schools were established, and it was decided that the training aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force must be increased sevenfold to 1,728 machines, of which Australia herself would build 568. This plan was put into operation with vigour, and welcomed by the air-minded young men of Australia; by March 1940, 5,736 new recruits had already been enlisted. To build up her Air Force over the next three years, Australia reckoned to spend £80 million.

New Zealand, despite her small population, embarked on a scheme to train 10,000 men in three years at a cost of £12,700,000. By March 1940, 4,000 young men had already enlisted for training as pilots alone.

While India was plunged into political controversy over the next step in her march to full self-government, her war effort was developing along parallel lines to those of the Dominions. A force was sent to the Middle East, an area well suited to the skill and training of Indian troops. Early in 1940 it was announced that an Indian Army contingent had joined the British forces in France. These were not first-line fighting

troops, but they were an invaluable reinforcement to the British Expeditionary Force, and they played a gallant part in the rearguard actions which culminated in the evacuation of Dunkirk. Meanwhile, the forces in India were reorganized to take care of new contingencies in defence. Recruiting continued briskly and enthusiastically. Among the special measures taken by the Government of India were a speed-up in completing the first Indian Air Force squadron and the formation of a second such squadron, with a growing reserve behind them. India, too, was beginning to play her part in the British Commonwealth "league of air powers."

Her economic contribution was also of great importance. India had a world monopoly in jute, and by the end of November 1939 she had already sent over 500 million sandbags to Great Britain, and was continuing to send them at the rate of 100 million a month. She also commanded important supplies of manganese ore, mica, saltpetre, vegetable oils, and hides, all very important items in the economic field of war. Before long, India was maintaining the whole Army in the Near and Far East in clothing and general stores. Apart from the boots included in this supply, the Government of India contracted to produce for the British Ministry of Supply a million pairs of boots in 1940. India was also supplying the United Kingdom and other Empire Governments with steel, munitions, electric cables, and other manufactures for war purposes. In her willing and indispensable contribution to the Commonwealth war effort, India had attained full Dominion status.

While the Dominions and India were forming their armies, and sending them overseas, and stepping munition production up to a mighty rhythm, and while their hammers rang together on the anvil to shape the first outlines of what was conceived as the greatest air arm the world had ever seen, the Colonies were throwing their energies with equal vigour into their own innumerable and invaluable tasks in the work of the war. In East Africa, which was later to be a front of fierce fighting, preparations to meet the anticipated threat were going ahead apace. By March 1940 the forces of the King's African Rifles, one of the most famous fighting corps in the Empire, had been increased threefold. The East African Army Service Corps, also greatly expanded, tackled a great task of supply and transport with stout efficiency. These men, recruited from Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, and Northern Rhodesia, had to do most of their transport by lorry in all sorts of country, and they did it splendidly. Kenya set about helping in the seaward defence of Mombasa and the rest of her shores, her citizens doing patrol work in the Kenya



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Auxiliary Air Unit and serving in the coast defence battery of the King's African Rifles. Many local craft were requisitioned and manned by local recruits who joined in the patrolling of the harbour and coasts, watching for submarines, sweeping for mines, and challenging and examining ships. An officers' training school was formed at Kampala and a flying school at Nakuru. A typical episode in East Africa's preparations was the great trek of the Northern Rhodesian contingent to Nairobi—a two-thousand mile mechanized trip that proved the capabilities both of the Rhodesian troops and of their modern transport, supplied by the Northern Rhodesian Government.

In West Africa the Royal West African Frontier Force was doubled by March 1940. There was great enthusiasm for the war effort everywhere, and calls for recruits in Sierra Leone and Gambia elicited a splendid response.

A Sierra Leone Defence Force was formed, and manned a number of posts, and in the Gambia light anti-aircraft units kept watch. In the Gold Coast and in Nigeria, and elsewhere, recruits poured in and chiefs offered to raise special battalions to serve the Empire.

The Mediterranean Colonies, so vital strategically, rapidly organized their defences with the eager co-operation of their inhabitants, who also made other valuable contributions to the war effort.

Besides forming a volunteer Home Defence Force, Cyprus provided the first colonial unit to serve in France. Many thousands enlisted in the Cypriot regiment, formed in February 1940, 6,000 joined the Royal Army Service Corps, and several thousand Cypriots living in Britain joined up there.

Malta organized a Territorial force for defence, and a Women's Auxiliary Reserve. Maltese manned the Royal Malta Artillery and the King's Own Malta Regiment, and the Colony sent its first expeditionary contingent abroad in May 1940. There are 1,300 Maltese in the Royal Navy, and a number in the Royal Air Force.

In Palestine both Arabs and Jews joined up in great numbers, and in Gibraltar full defence measures were taken.

Italy's entry brought the Mediterranean Colonies into the front line. All were raided by Italian planes—Malta systematically and persistently over a long period. The Maltese anti-aircraft personnel did splendid work against the raiders, while the civilians showed great calm and courage, carrying on their work whenever possible, and instituting effective A.R.P. measures.

In the Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements, British subjects of European descent were all registered for compulsory military service, the Malay Regiment was expanded, and forces in training were trebled. In Ceylon a man-power committee was set up to arrange for the enrolment of Europeans in the Ceylon Defence Force. In Hong Kong, all British residents of military age were enrolled in the Defence Force. And away in the South Seas, Fiji's call for volunteers to man the coast battery and coastal patrol services had met with a great response. Across in the West Indies the enthusiasm of the people for the Empire's cause was universal, and their response splendid. Bermuda has two permanent defence forces, and in addition has created a new defence corps. A Women's Auxiliary Air Force was formed. Many native seamen from Barbados joined the Royal Navy and the merchant marine, and in Trinidad a naval volunteer force was formed for service with the British Navy. In every other part of the British territories in the Western Atlantic the people put forward their whole effort.

It went against the grain with the loyal and courageous people of the dependent Empire to be encouraged to concentrate their war effort on economic contributions and on their own local defence, when their eager spirits would have led them into battle against the common foe in Europe or wherever he might be found.

While they were speeding up their creation of a world-wide war machine, the countries of the Empire were also systematically developing and organizing their enormous economic potential for the present and future needs of war.

With an ample supply of iron, copper, zinc, tungsten, magnesite, phosphates, timber, meat, and almost every other necessary raw material of industry, the British Empire produced a surplus—in many cases a heavy surplus—of wool, wheat, rubber, fats, lead, tin, nickel, manganese, chromium, vanadium, coal, and asbestos, besides many less-important commodities. The principal material in which the Empire was not self-sufficient was petroleum. But it had access to ample supplies of this commodity in Allied and neutral territory. There are some metals of which it did not produce enough for its needs, and its cotton production was slightly under its own demand. But here again there were assured sources of supply.

True, it was not enough to possess a wealth of materials unless they could be transported to Britain or to whatever part of the Empire required to use them. But in his most desperate and ruthless attempts

the enemy failed to cut off or dangerously reduce the sea transport of Empire materials and manufactures. Although the enemy's toll of shipping, including a great amount of neutral shipping, had been heavy, it was so low compared to the volume of goods safely transported that it did not act as a serious handicap to the total war effort of the Empire.

In raw materials the Empire had always been rich. But it had ceased to be a group of primary producers supplying one manufacturing centre in Britain, and had become an association of great industrial nations. The gross annual value of industrial output in the United Kingdom and the Dominions, according to the latest figures available before the war, was (in sterling) :

United Kingdom . . . . .	£2,880,000,000
Canada . . . . .	£724,631,900
Australia . . . . .	£399,023,313
South Africa . . . . .	£172,964,000
New Zealand . . . . .	£90,953,245

No such statistics are available for India, but she had long ago placed herself in the ranks of the great industrial nations of the world, her steel industry being particularly strong.

The metal trades of Canada produced a yearly output worth £79 million, those of Australia £49,500,000, and of South Africa £27 million.

These great manufacturing industries of the Dominions, extremely valuable in themselves as contributors to Empire economic strength, had the added value of providing a great potential plant for the production of munitions and other war materials. The necessary rationalization and reorientation towards war ends was vigorously carried out. Apart from the great expansion of actual munition factories, all the Dominion Governments obtained powers to control industry and requisition its product.

Australia threw into the struggle the weight of her industry, and of her primary production. She contracted to sell her entire wool-clip to Britain, together with the whole exportable surplus of copper, zinc, tungsten, wolfram, and scheelite.

Australia's war bill for 1939-40 was reckoned at £55 million, and for the following year estimated at £100 million on munitions alone. Fifty-five million pounds were set aside to be spent in three years on aircraft construction and maintenance. Four new munitions factories were

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established with many annexes in private industry, and work was begun at high pressure to fulfil a first order of £2,700,000 worth of munitions for Britain.

War loans give a further indication of the economic and financial effort that the Empire countries threw into the war. Australia launched an £18 million loan on March 1st, 1940; it was half subscribed next day, and filled up so rapidly that a further £20 million loan was floated on May 29th. An interest-free loan of £5 million was also launched on May 29th.

Canada early raised a £50 million war loan, which was over-subscribed by more than half.

New Zealand launched £4,142,000 worth of loans early in the war and the Government took authority to borrow £10 million more. Interest-free loans and donations by New Zealanders to the war effort amounted to £2 million by June 1940.

South Africa, whose February budget had included £14 million for war expenditure, raised a free gift fund of £2 million for the Allies.

The wealth of the Colonies is largely represented by primary produce, and all this vast wealth of agricultural produce, minerals, timber, sisal, etc., became available to the British war effort. Indeed, the seizure of more and more European countries into the Nazi concentration camp left the Empire with a problem of surplus rather than shortage in many important foodstuffs and raw materials. For this reason, and on account of the need to economize shipping space inward and outward, a necessary part of the Colonies' war effort was to work to make themselves more self-reliant economically.

The colonial citizens, not content with this share in the effort, also subscribed with enthusiastic generosity to free gifts to aid the cause. All over the Empire, communities both large and small raised funds for the Red Cross and to buy aeroplanes for the Royal Air Force.

So the Empire mobilized.

It instantly placed its forces on a war basis. As soon as they were ready it sent men overseas. It pooled its economic resources. It organized its industries for war, and started new industries which turned it into a chain of defensive strong-points, each able to stand virtually by itself in the production of munitions, and often to contribute a surplus to its neighbours. The Empire countries did all this freely and of their own choice. For they knew the cause was theirs, not only Great Britain's, as indeed it is the cause of all free men.

Up to the spring of 1940, the war effort of the Empire—with the chief exception of naval action—had been largely one of mobilization. The change from preparation to action came at almost exactly the moment when the whole face of the war was changed by the collapse of France and the entry of Italy. It was typical of this coincidence that the first units of the Canadian Army to be sent to France reached the fighting zone at the very moment when they had to be recalled in order to avert their being overwhelmed in the collapse of France herself. They were bitterly disappointed. In the months that were to follow they and other Empire troops played a very large part in the Battle of Britain by helping to form such a fierce and determined line of military defence that the enemy dare not approach it until he was confident of complete mastery in the air.

During the months that followed, there was a steady output of trained men and up-to-date equipment. The collapse of France and the dangers that it exposed gave a tremendous impetus to this Empire war effort. Any lingering apathy, or doubt whether large forces would be required to win the war, disappeared like mist before the wind. The Dominions adopted compulsory military service with the enthusiastic approval of the great majority of their populations.

In Canada compulsory service became law in June 1940. Service abroad, as for all the other Dominions, remained on a voluntary basis. By November 1940 there were about 165,000 men in the Canadian Active Service Force, and more than one-third of these were already abroad. Canadian units helped to defend Newfoundland, Iceland, and the West Indies through these critical months. As far back as November 1939 all unmarried men in Australia had become liable for military training. In June this duty was extended to all men of military age. By September 1940 the number of applicants for enlistment in the Australian Imperial Force approached 120,000 and recruiting had been temporarily suspended until the force of 90,000 men which was aimed at had been equipped and trained. There was a steady flow of Australian troops to Britain and to the Middle East. In the latter area they shared in the intensive training of the whole Imperial and Allied army which led up to the triumphant battle of the Western Desert. In this battle they and their fellow soldiers from New Zealand, with an Indian Division, were to play a stirring part.

In New Zealand compulsory military training was introduced in June 1940. Balloting among reservists for calling-up for service either in New Zealand or overseas began in November. The recruiting for the expeditionary force was suspended in July when the number of

applications exceeded 63,000. The total strength of the Force in November was 38,000, of whom about 21,000 were overseas.

In the Union of South Africa the principle of compulsory military training was already on the Statute Book. Within the first year of the war the Union had raised an army of 100,000 volunteers, and the best-equipped expeditionary force which South Africa has ever dispatched was sent to Kenya. Newfoundland, too small to have an army of her own, sent many volunteers overseas. The seventh contingent of the Newfoundland Heavy Artillery reached the United Kingdom in October 1940. Compulsory military training for all Europeans was introduced in Southern Rhodesia in May 1940. By November about 1,300 Southern Rhodesians were serving abroad, including 450 officers and men sent to strengthen various African units at the outbreak of war.

India continued with a steady expansion of her army from its peace-time strength of 160,000 men to the war-time objective of 500,000. There was no lack of excellent recruits ; they rolled up at the rate of 12,000 to 15,000 a month. By the end of the year about 60,000 men were serving overseas, in the United Kingdom, the Middle East, Aden, and Malaya. Among the forces of the Indian States the Bikaner Camel Corps moved to the Middle East. India's military effort was scarcely hindered by the political disagreements which led up to the adoption of "individual civil disobedience" by the Congress Party, and the consequent imprisonment of numbers of Congress leaders.

Colonial military forces continued to play a very important part in the defence of Africa. The King's African Rifles added to their honours in gallant actions on the Kenya frontier, and the Sudan Defence Force fought alongside other Empire troops in the defence of this vital area of the African continent.

In other arms the progress of the Empire war effort was equally striking. In November the first trainees from the Canadian section of the Empire Air Training Scheme arrived in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile Dominion airmen played a brave part in the fighting both in Africa and on the English Channel front, and in the bombing of enemy objectives in Europe. In November the Canadian Minister for Air announced that the Canadian Air Force numbered over 36,000. An equal number had been enrolled by that time in the Royal Australian Air Force from among applicants totalling 138,000.

Australian air units were serving not only in the United Kingdom and Middle East, but also in Malaya, which was rapidly becoming a vital

focus for the armed forces of the Eastern Group of the Empire countries. It was significant that the first Commander-in-Chief, Far East, whose appointment was announced on November 13th, 1940, was an Air Force officer, Air-Marshal Sir R. Brooke-Popham.

New Zealand had over 1,000 airmen serving overseas by November, the total strength of her Air Force being about 6,000 men. The South African Air Force meanwhile was upholding with great success the Allied air power in the East African theatre. Airmen from Newfoundland, Southern Rhodesia, India, and the Colonies were serving in the various war zones.

For the overseas Empire the great event in naval warfare during the second phase of the war, after the entry of Italy, was the sinking of the *Bartolomeo Colleoni* by H.M.A.S. *Sydney*. This Australian cruiser engaged two Italian cruisers faster than herself, and would probably have destroyed them both but for their extra turn of speed. Canadian warships played a gallant part, not only in Atlantic convoy work and North American defence, but also in the evacuation of the B.E.F. from France, a Canadian destroyer being lost during this operation. By November the Royal Canadian Navy mustered 155 vessels and 14,000 men. In July it was announced that eighty-two ships for the Navy were being built in Canada. Australia, too, was building fresh ships for her own Navy, including three destroyers and fifty patrol craft. By November the number of men serving in the Royal Australian Navy exceeded 15,000, while 3,000 New Zealanders were serving with the Royal Navy. Among the finest reinforcements of personnel for the Navy were more than 2,000 men from Newfoundland.

Not only did the realization of greater danger after the collapse of France lead to a rush of volunteers and a general acceleration of the training and equipping of armed forces in the overseas Empire; it also led in these countries, as in Britain itself, to an immense speed-up in industrial production for war purposes. Canada's two-year aircraft production programme was compressed into one year. Her aircraft industry was employing before the end of 1940 about 11,000 men. The output of all forms of munitions and military equipment was greatly increased—by November shells were being turned out at the rate of a million a month in Canada alone. Estimated war expenditure for the year ending March 1941 was \$700,000,000.

Australia was making almost all the guns and ammunition needed for her own forces, including Bren and Vickers guns, anti-aircraft and anti-

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tank guns. By November the production of 25-lb. howitzers was at an advanced stage. The Australian aircraft industry had also entered into a phase of steady production. Estimated war expenditure for 1940/41 was £186 million (Australian). South Africa was equipping her own expeditionary force in East Africa with all its needs except tanks, aeroplanes, and certain other specialities. Even Southern Rhodesia, a very lightly industrialised country, laid plans for making component parts for munitions to be manufactured in the Union.

India's industrial and economic effort was also of the greatest importance. The principle of compulsory industrial service for war production was introduced in July 1940. In November the United Kingdom Minister of Labour announced a scheme whereby several thousand Indian industrial workers would be trained in British workshops. Between the outbreak of war and December 1940, the two purchasing Departments coming under the Government of India's Department of Supply had placed orders to a total of £42 million, and it was stated that £10 million was being spent to modernize and equip Indian munition factories. Indian shipyards were working at full capacity building mine-sweepers and patrol boats, and, like those of other parts of the overseas Empire, were also helping to make good the losses of merchant shipping. In September 1940 a Mission from the United Kingdom Ministry of Supply, under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Roger, arrived in India to survey factories and to advise on the best means of increasing industrial output.

This was a preliminary to the Conference held at New Delhi among the Eastern Group of British Empire countries, from South Africa to New Zealand, to consider how best to blend their respective economic and industrial capacities into a concerted war effort for the group as a whole. The Conference, which opened on October 25th, was able to discover a number of ways in which the war output of these countries could be enlarged or rendered more economical. It invited the participating Governments to set up a permanent secretariat in India to study continuously these problems of industrial expansion and co-ordination.

The Colonies, too, played a highly important part in the economic and financial effort of the British Commonwealth. Up to November 28th, 1940, the amount subscribed by the countries of the Colonial Empire to the common war effort had reached a total of £17,890,000, in addition to their own very substantial local expenditures for defence purposes. Among the items of economic effort were the establishment of a beef-

canning factory in Kenya for the feeding of the Empire forces in East Africa, the development of repair shipyards at Lagos and Freetown, considerable industrial and mining expansion in Malaya—described as “a Dollar Arsenal of the Empire,” because of its ability to export raw materials needed in the United States—the opening of a steel foundry at Haifa in Palestine, and the mass production of mahogany for shipbuilding and aeroplane propellers in British Honduras.

From all over the Empire there continued to pour in expressions of loyalty and enthusiasm for the common cause of overthrowing Nazi and Fascist tyranny. The Empire's heart, as well as its hand and brain, was in the war. There could have been no greater tribute to the qualities of British Imperialism.

## CHAPTER 6

### ITALY ENTERS THE WAR

By C. J. S. SPRIGGE

#### ITALY OUTSIDE THE MÈLÉE

WHEN Count Galeazzo Ciano, as Foreign Minister of Italy, delivered on December 17th, 1939, a detailed exposition of Italy's foreign policy as it had developed up to that moment, he had the attentive ear of the politicians and diplomatists of the world.

Alone of the major powers of Europe, Italy, on September 1st, 1939, had no inevitable determined course to pursue. The military alliance between Germany and Italy signed on May 22nd, 1939, had, on the face of it, seemed to bind Italy to participation in any and every war waged by Germany ; but rumours had circulated among diplomatists about a secret exchange of understandings between the two signatories, by which Italy had guarded against an immediate war, and against having to take arms as the enemy of Poland. A few weeks earlier the German march into Prague, on March 15th, 1939, had been as unexpected and as unwelcome in Rome as in London : it had put an end, in Italy, to some sincere sympathy for Germany as being engaged solely on the task of uniting the German race. Against that, however, the preliminary British agreement with Turkey had rendered more plausible the theory of an Anglo-French "encirclement" directed against Italy. What, however, in the latter part of August reduced the prospect of Italy fighting at the side of Germany from fair probability to unlikelihood was the sudden understanding of Berlin with Moscow : an understanding which not only outraged, or at least estranged, the other countries friendly to Italy—Spain and, in some degree, Portugal—but in its specific purpose appeared to change the character of Germany's prospective campaign from that of a march into Danzig and Silesia in pursuit of German national unification, to that of an expedition of rapine in collusion with the Soviet for the partition and annihilation of Catholic Poland. Italy might have

to applaud such an exploit for prudential motives ; but it was in itself utterly repugnant to Italy's well-known desires.

Observers in Italy, moreover, who had witnessed the country's almost total abstention from warlike preparations during the great rehearsal of September 1938, doubted whether, in the meantime, the régime had brought the country any nearer to readiness for facing attacks from the air or for a sudden cutting off of seaborne supplies of fuel and raw materials —two certain consequences of a declaration of war by Mussolini in September 1939. There operated also in forming an opinion among British people that Italy would not fight, the fascination of the pattern of the War of 1914, when Italy, though the Ally of Germany and Austria, had at once made a declaration of neutrality. Fortified by this memory, some indulged the sentiment that the Italians were at heart too friendly to Britain for a war between the two countries to be conceivable ; others, similarly fortified, indulged the sentiment of contempt for a people which they judged too slippery and fickle, too easy-going, to let itself in for the horrors of a long and pitiless European contest merely in order to honour an alliance. The former underestimated the change of mind which in the past decade had overtaken the Italians in regard to the first Great War and to their former Allies ; the latter forgot, perhaps, that if in 1914 the Italians kept out of the war, in 1915 they deliberately went into it for motives of acquisitiveness and resentment against Austria : in 1940 Italy was disposed in somewhat the same way against France.

The riddle was solved for the moment when, on September 1st, Mussolini announced—by a Stefani communiqué—that Italy would take no military initiative. This position was shortly afterwards defined as one of “non-belligerence” as contrasted with neutrality. By this qualification he claimed to have kept Italy in line with all obligations of the “Pact of Steel.” It was at once stated in Rome, and confirmed in Berlin, that the belligerent Ally and the non-belligerent were working in full accord. The Italian Press and wireless, not indeed without some changefulness of pitch and some minor dissonances, meanwhile persisted, throughout the declarations of war and the first news of the military campaigns, in its well-ingrained convention of echoing and seconding the organs of German propaganda.

In that notable speech of December 17th, Count Ciano professed to give to the whole world an irrefutable justification for Mussolini's conduct, illustrating from the events of the two previous decades how the war had been rendered first possible, then probable, finally inevitable, by the

behaviour of other Powers than Italy and her Ally ; how Germany, therefore, had been justified in making war while Italy had observed the alliance in letter and spirit. There were some interesting omissions in the narrative ; there were also some significant implications, perceptible to the careful listener or reader, of a less than perfect concord between the German and Italian dictators.

The Italian Foreign Minister harked back to a speech of Mussolini in May 1927 in which the Fascist leader had forecast a great European crisis between 1935 and 1940. For Fascism, Ciano claimed that it had from the first opposed the splitting of Europe into victor and vanquished nations. On Britain and France he placed the full responsibility for the devastating affair of Reparations. That Mussolini, in forecasting the crisis, did much to promote it—for the 1927 speech was heavy with militaristic boastings—was a thought which may have struck some of Ciano's hearers. Others may have remembered that in the crucial month of January 1923, Mussolini, new to office, gave Italy's support to the extreme French rather than to the moderate British thesis on Reparations, and afforded Britain no help whatever in curbing French harshness against vanquished Germany. However, in Ciano's simplified picture Mussolini and Fascist Italy took credit for an attitude of criticism towards the whole set of European policy after 1918 ; and verbal criticism to support that claim of Ciano could probably be found for quotation. But the critical attitude of Mussolini and Fascism to the Versailles settlement was neither consistent (as could be shown from a multitude of other quotations), nor did it tend to any sustained programme of action.

Ciano, in any case, portrayed the proposal of the Four Power Pact advanced by Mussolini in March 1933, as the simple culmination of such an Italian programme of readjustment and reconciliation ; and from the foiling of the project (laid largely to the book of Poland) he dated the precipitate worsening of inter-European relations. The Abyssinian War arose out of "the duty which (in such circumstances) lay upon Italy to provide for her own security, her independence, her future," by conquering Abyssinia. Next, Italy had intervened in the Spanish civil struggle. Ciano demonstrated that the Spanish Republican régime had been infiltrated by influences from Moscow and that when General Franco raised the standard of revolt, Italy recognized that this was no ordinary outbreak on the part of a military junta, but an authentic national revolution. None the less (he argued), Italy limited her military intervention to the dimensions of a makeweight only partly offsetting the



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superior foreign assistance given to the other side. The Minister somewhat noticeably called attention to the "virtual identity" of the Spanish and Italian languages, as having allowed of a warm brotherhood in arms between the "legionaries" and their Spanish associates.

In the Abyssinian and Spanish conflicts, Germany and Italy had begun to draw near to each other. Germany, another nation "demanding justice," had not joined the "forces of oppression and constraint" in their action against Italy. The resultant "Axis" had its first application in the common policy of Germany and Italy in Spain. But what consolidated the Axis and led (on the occasion of Mussolini's triumphal tour in Germany in September 1937) to the signing of the Antikomintern Pact by Italy in association with Germany and Japan was the common policy of Anti-Communism. Here Ciano observed significantly that if this had been no more than an understanding for the repression of internal Communism in the respective countries, a scheme of collaboration between their police services would have fully met the case. A solemn engagement between Governments corresponded to a much more serious intent.

Meanwhile, the Powers at the head of the League of Nations had not frankly recognized the results of the Italian victory in Abyssinia. Italy, therefore, in December 1937, retired from the League. With a few abrupt and pictorial phrases the Italian Foreign Minister hereupon brought the narrative up to the quasi-climax of Munich, where, thanks to Mussolini, there had, for a moment, shone forth a prospect of pacification and collaboration. "But upon Munich followed anti-Munich." On the side of the democracies, that is to say, and on the part even of the men who had led the way to Munich, there came to prevail the feeling that they must proceed no farther on that path; they resolved instead upon a return (said Ciano) to the policy of coercion, and tried to draw Soviet Russia into the alignment.

In March 1939, proceeded Ciano, Germany marched into Prague; and shortly after, but without any concerted arrangement, and in quite different circumstances, Italy marched into Albania. Britain took occasion to extend a guarantee to Poland, and then to Rumania and Greece, and to make a preliminary agreement with Turkey, while pressing forward the approaches to Moscow. In reply, the Foreign Ministers of the two Axis Powers, Ciano himself and Ribbentrop, met at Milan on May 6th, 1939, and laid down the bases of the military alliance, signed a fortnight later, known as the Pact of Steel.

The Chamber listened with intense interest to what Ciano revealed

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about his own discussions in May with Ribbentrop. With the Reich Foreign Minister he had agreed that their two countries needed a long period of peace in which to complete their internal and military reconstruction. This period was assessed at four to five years for Germany and three years for Italy. Not that the two countries intended at the end of the period to go to war ; but they agreed that in the course of it they would not raise questions leading to new polemics. It was on this basis that they concluded the Treaty of Alliance which established between them relations like those of France and Britain.

Up to that stage Germany had repeatedly indicated that the differences with Poland could be solved by diplomatic means. According to the argument developed by Ciano, the British and French guarantees to Poland (regarding which Mussolini had uttered a personal warning to the British Ambassador at the end of May) filled the Poles with a new spirit of truculence. Incidents multiplied ; conflict was in the air ; and the Italian Government took the initiative of asking for further consultations with Germany in order to try to preserve the peace, but at the same time to safeguard German interests. Ciano himself had therefore gone to Salzburg on August 11th.

The Chamber listened once again with the closest attention to an account of the conversations of Ciano with Ribbentrop, and also with Hitler. On Mussolini's instructions Ciano had proposed the issue of a joint Italo-German declaration, that, despite the extreme gravity of the situation, a diplomatic solution was still possible. But Hitler and Ribbentrop had demonstrated that in consequence of Polish ill-will and atrocities the question had slipped on to military ground. Ciano, however, had not failed to convey the reasons why Italy favoured a pacific settlement, or, failing that, at least a close localization of the war.

Not less intently did the Chamber follow the Minister's exposition of the immediately subsequent event—Ribbentrop's visit to Moscow to sign a treaty of non-aggression with the U.S.S.R. Italy and Germany, said Ciano, had agreed in May to work towards an easing of their relations with Russia, in order to keep that country from combining with the Western democracies in a policy of encirclement. But Germany's fundamental hostility to Russia had seemed to put strict limits on the scope of such an approach. The Chamber loudly cheered this assertion that Nazi Germany was fundamentally antagonistic to Russia ; it also loudly cheered the quip that Britain and France, with their long wait in the anti-chamber of the Kremlin, had been the first to reintroduce Russia

into European politics. Thus prepared, Ciano's listeners were told that only on August 21st at 10 p.m. had Ciano been informed, by a telephone call from Ribbentrop, of the visit to Moscow fixed for the next day but one.

In the remainder of this long exposition—the one attempt, in recent years, at a detailed rationale of Italy's international policy—Ciano recounted the efforts made in Rome, in the last days of August and the first of September, to check the outbreak of war, and explained Italy's abstention from the resort to arms. He claimed that moderating influence had been exerted from Rome on both sides. On the last day of August Mussolini proposed to Britain and France a conference for the revision of the Treaty of Versailles, being certain that Germany would participate if assured that Britain, France, and Poland would adhere. The answers were delayed until after hostilities broke out, and then Britain made a condition of the withdrawal of German troops from the positions already occupied.

On September 1st Italy had made known that she would take no military initiative. This decision, Ciano insisted, was in complete accord with the provisions of the alliance with Germany : it had first been made known to Germany alone ; it had been reached without any exercise of pressure on Italy from any side ; meanwhile, Italy was not afraid of war —had been for more years at war than at peace since 1911—would have marched, and would march, as soon as the Duce gave the signal.

From this elaborate depiction of Italy's international relations Count Ciano had eliminated every echo of that rivalry and suspicion between Italy and Germany which in a dispassionate review of the inter-war period would be found a persistently recurring theme. No mention was there of Locarno ; of Italy's carefully built up hegemony over Austria ; of the plans for an economic settlement of Danubian Europe under Italy's leadership ; nothing of the movement of Italian troops towards the Austrian frontier in August 1934, to threaten invasion if Hitler's plots should materialize in a subversion of the Catholic Corporative State. In Ciano's simplified picture Italy was shown despairing of the possibility of bringing Britain and France to an understanding of the need for justice for Germany (and at the same time for Italy) ; nothing was shown of Italy's despair at failing to gain British and French co-operation for the organizing of Danubian Europe with the exclusion of German interest. Count Ciano simply omitted from his narrative the date of Italy's abandonment of what had for twenty years been cease-

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lessly proclaimed a major purpose : the upholding of Austria's independence from Germany. All the episodes of tension were taken to have been forgotten and resolved in the Italo-German Axis and alliance. Only some hints were left in evidence of the strain that had persisted even when the association of the countries became intimate. Thus Ciano plainly stated that the Germans had bound themselves not to risk a war until several years after 1940 ; that they had given repeated assurances that they would proceed only by diplomacy against Poland, but had in August repudiated these assurances ; and that they had taken Italy by surprise by rushing into an association with Soviet Russia of an intimacy which their previous professions seemed to have wholly precluded.

Implicit in the whole exposition, however, was the claim that Italy had by the ill-will and short-sightedness of her former Allies become a victim, instead of a victorious beneficiary, of the Versailles Peace settlement, and had thus by her own ex-Allies been thrust into a community of interests with Germany.

### THE BACKGROUND OF MUSSOLINI'S PROBLEMS

In his review of the origins of the war of 1939 the Italian Foreign Minister adapted the facts as best he might to the theory of Mussolini's unique foresight, fitting each episode into its place in a gradual and consistent development of Italian policy. It is necessary now to look at the same events without that preconception.

Up to the moment of the Abyssinian crisis, in the summer of 1935, Italy was conscious of no subject of overt conflict with Great Britain of the sort that is expressed in Parliamentary speeches or newspaper polemics. Italian complaints about the bars upon Italian emigration, the obstacles to Italian export development, the publicity willingly accorded to anti-Fascist exiles, and the scepticism expressed about Fascism as a political doctrine were indeed on occasion addressed to England, but at the same time, and in greater measure, to the United States and to France. On the British side there was no sense whatever of danger to be feared from an enterprising policy on the part of a prolific and expanding Italy, whether such policy were successful or thwarted. This is attested notably by the opinion expressed by a committee of Colonial administrators, presided over by Sir John Maffey, in 1935, that Italian suzerainty over Abyssinia would not be harmful to British interests. (The "Maffey Report" was a confidential document. A Rome newspaper somehow procured a copy

of it and published it, failing to recognize that it showed up the hollowness of the campaign against Britain as the deliberate frustrator of Italian ambitions.) But Mussolini and the Fascist chiefs had not the patience to turn their energies to the delicate and complex task of promoting Italy's interests in a rational system of inter-State relationships. In their crude appetite for tangible triumph they could not forbear to plunge into violation of treaties and defiance of Great Britain as the chief guarantor of treaties. More surprised and puzzled than angry, Great Britain put up the minimum of opposition to these projects—short of which her attitude would have been one of sheer connivance—and thereafter endeavoured, in the next four years, to get the episode forgotten on both sides. Perplexity, however, bred a pained suspicion among British people that the adventure in Abyssinia might be only the first in a series, as, indeed, it proved to be. On the Italian side this British suspicion was regarded now naïvely, and now with deliberate misunderstanding, as a sign of ingrained malevolence.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain, as soon as he had assumed the Premiership, set out to try to obliterate recent bitter memories, and to convince Mussolini that he had no reason to fear revenge. Mussolini having, however, openly declared for the Franco party in the Spanish Civil War, and giving military aid to that party under an ever more transparent pretence of "non-intervention," every approach made by the British Government to an understanding with Rome signified connivance with the Italian policy in Spain, unless it brought with it a measure of withdrawal by the Italians from their interference. Since the British Government was not in a position to go far along the way of connivance, while the Italian Government proportioned its assistance to General Franco to the ensuring of defeat for the Republicans, the two Governments achieved nothing by the signing of their various "Gentlemen's Agreements" in 1936, 1937, and 1938. The two countries became strangers to each other. Italy was impoverished by war; exchange restrictions hampered imports from abroad and largely put an end to foreign travel on the part of Italians. British residents largely withdrew from Italy to escape not from any social unfriendliness—for of this there was but seldom any sign—but from the exactions of the tax collector and the restraints of an increasingly restless dictatorship. British Conservatives had sharply revised, since 1935, a generally favourable opinion of the Fascist régime; British Socialists remained convinced that Fascism was middle-class reaction against Socialist progress, and had therefore

nothing in it of interest to them. Military circles in Britain refused to recognize as a first-class factor in European affairs a country deficient in raw materials at home and too weak at sea to command secure overseas supplies.

In January 1935 Mussolini appeared for a moment to have brought Italy to the starting-point of a new relationship with France. Pierre Laval, French Premier, was received festively in Rome, and the two heads of Government put their signature to a solution of the Tunisian question by which, after a generation, Italy would have ceased to claim a special status for Italians in Tunis. France granted some frontier rectifications in African territories. These were plainly of minor importance compared with France's gain over Tunis, and it was evident to all that Mussolini, shocked by the Nazis' conspiracy in Austria in 1934—to frustrate which he had moved troops to the Brenner—was seeking a combination with France. It had been Italy's complaint, since 1918, that France had not been ready in any degree to abate or to share with Italy the predominance in Eastern and Balkan Europe which by treaties and loans she had built up as a rear defence against Germany. Probably neither Mussolini nor Laval foresaw that the attempted Franco-Italian entente would almost at once be put to the test by an Anglo-Italian crisis. Such, however, was the case. No French statesman of high rank would risk the friendship of Great Britain for that of Italy; while the "Popular Front" leaders who soon after drove Laval from power not only showed less interest (strongly tinged as they were with traditional pacifism) in a Franco-Italian alignment against Germany, but were exemplars of something disliked and feared by Mussolini above all else: a political dynamism operating without suppression of liberties in a Latin country exercising a strong force of attraction towards Italy. Such a political tendency in France Mussolini disliked all the more for its sympathy with a tendency in Spain equally or more hostile to himself. The great dilemma of 1940 was already present in embryo: Germany threatened Italy in the vital national interest (so often proclaimed to be such) of the maintenance of an independent Austria; but—the fundamental point of all—a steady association of Italy with France opened the way to no career of expansion for Italy, since presumably any expansion would be in defiance of the League system backed by Great Britain. Yet a mere association for the maintenance of the existing state of Europe against German pressure might leave Italy wondering why she should put up, at the cost of civil liberty, with permanent domination by Mussolini and Fascism.

To Mussolini the permanent domination of Fascism over Italy ranked as a constituent part of Italian national policy ; not for nothing had the word "Fascist" been inserted in the title of every association or guild in the kingdom, vetoing the very thought of Italian existence which was not at the same time Fascist existence. The need to justify the discipline of dictatorial government by a show of advantages accruing to its subjects, or at the very least by an ever-renewed display of disasters falling upon those rejecting it, determined a set of Italian policy which should menace France and disturb the workings of French democracy. To that end, by 1937 Mussolini was prepared to go a long way in company with Germany, even though it should cost him at once a heavy sacrifice of traditional Italian interests.

In fact, not many weeks after Mussolini's festal journey to Berlin, Hitler decided to put an end to the independent Austria which had been for a decade Italy's zone of influence and much-advertised bulwark. This time Mussolini refrained from even the mildest protest to Berlin. The Catholic Corporative State of Austria was allowed to go down without a word of regret from Rome. Hitler telegraphed his famous "Mussolini, I will never forget this," and Mussolini, in his next speech, referred what had happened to the inexorable logic of history. In his readiness to stand with Germany, even at the cost of great and open sacrifices of Italian national interest, in order to maintain his pressure against Parliamentary France and Republican Spain, Mussolini was himself deceived about the scope of Nazi policy in Europe, not otherwise than were the "appeasers" in England and France. For throughout the remainder of 1938 he continued to represent the Germans as having no other purpose than to unite the whole German race under the sovereignty of the Reich. In speech after speech he demanded, as the solution of the Czechoslovak crisis, "plebiscites," and vowed that the Germans would not consent to dominate an alien race even if they might.

Italy's assimilation to Germany was meanwhile prosecuted by means of greater or smaller measures, by all of which the Italian people were made to feel that they were inescapably enmeshed in the politics of the Reich. Mussolini and his henchmen adopted a German style of uniform with high peaked caps and tightly belted great-coats. The goose-step —christened *passo romano*—was introduced into the drill of the Italian Army. In June 1938 a caucus of Italian professors submitted to Mussolini, amid much Press publicity, a pronouncement on the "Aryan" character of the Italian race and on the non-Italianity of Jews. At a

bound, the small and eccentric group of Italian anti-Semites, whose doctrines had recently been ridiculed in official publications like the great Italian Encyclopedia, became the spokesmen of the régime, and by a law of July 1938 Jews were compulsorily retired from commissioned rank in the forces, from Civil Service and academic posts, from positions of responsibility in banks and insurance companies, and were forced to surrender real property of more than a given value, in exchange for State bonds. The anti-Semitic campaign was launched to synchronize with the preliminary staff talks, conducted on the Italian side by General Pariani, for the conclusion of a formal German-Italian military alliance.

Beside this tightening grip of Hitlerian Germany upon the life of Italy, some desultory attempts at better Anglo-Italian understanding were insignificant enough, except for the weight of the Italian popular feeling which desired their success. Mr. Neville Chamberlain, on becoming Premier, had sent a personal message to Mussolini, and received an encouraging acknowledgment. Early in 1938 Mr. Anthony Eden, the victim since 1935 of the most violent attacks and lurid insinuations on the part of the Italian Press, resigned from the Foreign Secretaryship on a difference with Mr. Chamberlain. The Premier wished to conclude an agreement with Italy despite the unconcealed intervention of Italian troops in the Spanish conflict. The Foreign Secretary was for a firm insistence upon Italian withdrawal from Spain as the condition of such an agreement. By contrast with Mr. Eden, Mr. Chamberlain was represented in the Italian Press as standing for the sane elements in England. For many months that Press tried to depict Britain as being in course of estrangement from France, and as relatively ready to acquiesce in a Mussolinian settlement in Spain. The British Government, however, stopped some way short of that, and an agreement, signed in May 1938, between Britain and Italy (superseding the earlier "Gentlemen's Agreement") in effect did no more than to state, subject to a measure of Italian withdrawal from Spain, that the two countries intended to respect each other's positions.

The quarrel of Germany with Czecho-Slovakia, and the resentment between Germany and the Allied democracies proceeded towards the quasi-climax of Michaelmas 1938 without further change in the relations of London and Rome. But when the world was waiting hourly for a declaration of war, when already the London parks were being scarred with trenches, it was through the offices of Mussolini that Mr. Chamberlain made contact with Hitler and instead of going to war went to Munich.

That Mussolini desired peace, or at all events had no thought of leading Italy at that time into war, is attested by the absence of warlike preparations in Italy at that juncture—the exposed Italian cities had taken no measures of air-raid protection, no special supplies of war materials had been accumulated, and the mobilization of several million men was carried out in leisurely fashion, partly after the end of the crisis. Mr. Chamberlain credited Mussolini with having worked to prevent the outbreak of war, and in Italy itself only a quite subordinate share of credit was left over after Mussolini had claimed his ovations as the peacemaker.

The Italian people at large saw in Munich a successful intervention by Mussolini to keep the peace. For all their awareness of what the German seizure of Austria up to the Brenner might betoken for Europe, they accepted as desirable some further readjustment of European frontiers in Germany's favour—if only because it would be at the expense of a supposed client of France. Yet if the readjustment should lead to a Franco-German understanding and leave France free to ignore every claim put forward by Italy for a new deal in North Africa, Mussolini's alliance with Germany would have had the effect of aiding the Ally to a substantial booty, but letting the same Ally play the policeman to warn Italy herself away from any acquisitive designs. Now, immediately after Munich Ribbentrop went to Paris to sign a treaty for the exclusion of war between France and Germany. Italians had it that Germany was ready, as the price of such an agreement, to put her signature to a guarantee of the integrity of the French Colonial Empire. On the eve of the Ribbentrop visit to Paris the Italian Chamber, obeying some unseen stimulus, broke out into an uproarious demand for "Tunis! Nice! Corsica!" on the signal of some mild enough words about Italy's "national aspirations" which concluded a statement by Count Ciano. The demonstration, undoubtedly staged to break a silence then settling around Italian ambitions after the satisfaction of many Germany ambitions, had the effect—according to one story—of eliminating from the Franco-German declaration an intended reference to the inviolability of the French Empire.

This renewal of Italo-French rancour cruelly complicated Mr. Chamberlain's programme of conciliation with Mussolini. In pursuit of this he had decided in October to ratify the agreement of six months before, though Mussolini scarcely pretended to have abated his interference in Spain. He accepted, at the same time, an invitation to visit Rome some weeks later for discussions with Mussolini. But meanwhile

Mussolini had noisily renewed his demands for France to pay Italy some price for peace, thereby exasperating French nationalism into an attitude of blunt refusal—as Daladier a little later put it to the Corsicans : “ Jamais ! ” It might have been expected that Mr. Chamberlain would either cancel his journey to Rome, or else lend himself to the purposes of Mussolini by urging the French to listen to him. But Mr. Chamberlain attempted to preserve the full identity of British and French policy while continuing his approaches to Mussolini. The visit which he paid to Rome in January 1939 was therefore, in terms of practical politics, entirely sterile.

The British Ministers met Mussolini and Ciano for a bare couple of hours during the four days' visit, and the Duce ostentatiously found time for a ski-ing holiday in the course of it. The proceedings were terminated by an exchange of frigidly official toasts, and Mr. Chamberlain told the British journalists that the question of Italy's “ national aspirations ” had not been raised. Quite obviously, in fact, a complete Anglo-French entente was incompatible with an approach by Britain to Italy as long as Italy advanced claims against France (and sought German backing for these claims) while France indignantly rejected them. No discussion, therefore, was possible about Italy's alignment in the Axis against Britain and France ; that is to say, on what might be the enemy side in a future European war. But at that time probably neither Chamberlain nor Mussolini was convinced that the conflict of politics in Europe would take warlike form. Chamberlain was acting still on the hypothesis that Hitler would refrain from further annexations by outright aggression ; Mussolini believed that England would resign herself to many sacrifices at the expense of third parties (including a France not strong enough to stand without British support) before engaging in war. Either side believed, therefore, that there was time for leisurely discussion : Chamberlain hoping to reach a phase of oblivion of past controversies—and at that moment a victory of the Franco party in Spain was relegating Spanish intervention questions to the past—while Mussolini hoped to get on to the ground of French concessions at British behest. At the Rome meeting the two parties did little more than mark time.

But the people of Rome, without official encouragement, welcomed Mr. Chamberlain cordially. After claiming the fullest merit for himself as the peacemaker of Munich, Mussolini was credited by his simpler countrymen with having vast designs for peace, and it was not from a sentiment of friendliness (though that was largely present) so much as from an ardent

desire to see one step accomplished on the way to an assurance of peace that the Romans and other Italians surrounded Mr. Chamberlain with displays of sympathy.

Chamberlain did not expect, and Mussolini did not pretend to himself, that Italy, after all that had happened, might break from alignment with Germany ; the hopes of both of them that this alignment might not betoken war were frustrated in March, when Hitler taught adversaries and Allies alike that he would follow his path without heeding whether it might lead to war. On the part of Britain and France Hitler's throwing off of the Munich appeasement mask led to the policy of the guarantees to Poland, and to the declaration of war of September 3rd, 1939 ; on the part of Italy it led to a hurried attempt to keep pace with the Axis partner by snatching Albania, and to the military alliance with Germany that was signed in May. With the alliance Mussolini paid the price of his escapade in Abyssinia four years before ; cut off from constructive co-operation with the Western Powers, he was vowed to co-operation with Germany for a work of destruction. Yet the understandings which went with the treaty, revealed by Count Ciano for the first time on December 17th, 1939, are a testimony that Mussolini, even if he no longer felt master of his own decision about war, yet believed that the war might be long delayed or even avoided altogether by subtle diplomacy on the German side and craven resignation on the part of Britain.

Upon the march into Prague, revealing Hitler's true view of post-Munich politics in Europe, there followed rapidly the moves preliminary to a war which Britain and France had made up their minds to face, and which, unless one of the protagonists should suddenly weaken, Italy was no longer in a position to escape. That is to say, there followed Italy's invasion of Albania, the preliminary Anglo-French guarantees to Poland, the Anglo-French treaties with Turkey. The Italians watched helplessly while Hitler picked his conclusive quarrel with Poland : Poland, the eastern outpost of the Roman Church, associated by long traditions, and even by post-war political and economic affinity with Italy. Between May and August, as Ciano revealed, the Germans withdrew their soothing assurances that Polish controversies would not give rise to war. Sullenly resentful against every step that Britain had taken to hinder the disturbance of the international order in Abyssinia and Spain ; aware that in a world returning in defiance of Germany to international order Italy would see the way open for a recovery of individual liberty at home ; committed by gestures, speeches, and interpretations to partisanship with

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Germany (and even, more distantly, with Japan) in a world supposedly sorting itself into rival Leagues, under the rival banners of authority and of democracy, Mussolini appeared entirely without means of following an independent policy. Meantime, throughout Italy, to the knowledge of every traveller, the universal prayer was for peace and the not far from universal preference—as between the protagonists of Europe—for England and against Germany. War at the side of Germany, then, would inevitably bring into the forefront of Italian consciousness a deep internal conflict ; and this, along with an exposed strategic situation on every front, would be Italy's weakness at the day of reckoning.

But would the protagonists face up to the clash ? Would not either Germany or the Western democracies swallow their pride and obtain a breathing space in which Mussolini might still clutch at new opportunities and combinations ? For a moment he may have believed that this would come to pass when Hitler, in desperate dread of “ encirclement ” and war on two fronts, sent emissaries to Moscow to withdraw, in the fullest glare of world interest, the threats and defiances of a whole decade of Hitlerian policy ; to patch up, indeed, a lightning alliance with that Power out of enmity to which the whole authoritarian grouping professed to draw its reasons for existence. As Ciano was careful to relate, the Italian Government had not believed that such a change of policy on the part of Germany was possible, and had had no notification of Ribbentrop's departure for Moscow until the day before it occurred. The event was calculated, thought Hitler and Ribbentrop, to throw Britain and France into complete disarray. But the disarray was very much more evident among the associates of Germany. Openly expressed by the Government of distant Japan, cautiously confessed by the Press of the informal semi-Ally, Nationalist Spain, wholly unuttered in Italy, the sentiment that Germany had thrown over her policy to the point of compromising every agreement which had been based upon it gained ground. Well, no sacrifice might be too great to ensure escape from the alternatives of humiliation and defeat. For an hour Mussolini may have indulged thoughts of an advantage for himself should Germany induce the Western Powers to abandon their policy in the face of Hitler's abandonment of a large part of his own. There might be, first, a share in prizes brought to a new super-Munich Conference table ; next, a weakening of the structure of Nazi Germany through contact with Russia, and a regrouping of States with a gradual change of purpose. But when the Western Powers, on their side, reaffirmed their policies without the slightest modification,

the prospect of war stood out more starkly than ever before. For Italy the circumstances could not have had a more repugnant appearance. Germany's war was against Poland, a country particularly associated with Italy by memories of common conspiracy against the German-Austrian autocracy ; and Germany was acting in connivance with Russia, to stamp out whose influence in Europe Italy had been engaged for three years in an unofficial war in Spain. Nor were the strategic and economic prospects at all bright. The Alpine frontier of France was geographically unfavourable to Italy, whose greatest industrial centres were close to it, and her main railway communications a good target for an enemy commanding the sea. Superior sea power would enable the enemy to sever Italian connexions with the overseas colonies and garrisons, and would entirely cut off seaborne supplies, throwing Italy back on to a share in the supplies of a blockaded Germany. Such were the commonplaces of café conversationalists, and their force was sufficient for Hitler not to insist upon an immediate entry, at his side, in the war which he unleashed on September 1st, 1939. An Italy so weak as a combatant would serve him better as a non-combatant, especially if, as he hoped, England and France contented themselves with a month or two of token warfare.

It may be supposed, then, that Hitler easily conceded Mussolini's desire to remain beside him only in the previously unknown condition of a non-belligerent Ally ; and that messages from President Roosevelt, and the Sovereigns of the Low Countries, added little to the weight of arguments which Mussolini already had found convincing. This is not to say that his decision to stand aside from warfare did not fill the heart of British and French statesmen with hope, nor even that such hope was merely sentimental or naïve. But in default of any broadly envisaged policy towards Italy, in the absence of any bold delineation of either the severer or the milder features of such a policy, mere hopefulness proved futile and unproductive.

#### THE CONDITION OF NON-BELLIGERENCE

Within a few hours of the first German bombs falling on Warsaw the Italian Government gave a definition of its policy which caused deep and evident satisfaction throughout the country : " Italy will not take the initiative in armed action." A few weeks before it had seemed so certain that Italy would be obliged to take up arms at the side of Germany, that now the policy of "non-belligerence" looked like an irreparable breach

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in the collaboration of the two Axis countries. And if England and France had promptly struck with their whole power at Germany, forcing her to a war on two fronts, then Italy's non-belligerence would no doubt have signified an abandonment of her Ally. But for three days dissensions in Paris delayed the declaration of war by the two Western Powers, and when they did declare war, it was almost in the spirit of non-belligerency. Not altogether without reason, Ciano, in his exposition of these proceedings, remarked in defence of Italy's non-belligerence that nobody else was showing any particular desire to embark upon warfare. The Allied war programme consisted, really, of economic sanctions against Germany backed by an armed blockade, and while Germany was left to destroy at leisure the armies of Poland, she too refrained from initiating serious land or air warfare against the enemies in the west, striving only to break the blockade and to impose a counter-blockade. Mussolini would have desired that the Axis should avoid even the risk of general war, and was undoubtedly displeased by the opening of German hostilities against Poland ; but once these were opened, both the Dictators were in agreement in desiring to extinguish the incipient war in the west, and for a time had hopes of doing so. Mussolini made immediate overtures to France and England for a conference with Germany, but refrained from pursuing the project when the British Government laid it down as an essential preliminary that the German troops should be withdrawn from Poland into German territory. Doubtless the Italian Government in the following months kept a close eye upon possibilities of a settlement to consolidate Germany's gains in Poland by a general laying down of arms in the west, not without payment of a substantial broker's fee to be charged to France and Britain for the benefit of Italy. Until February 1940, if no later, the visits of Italian notables to Berlin and those of German, American, or other notables to Rome were popularly interpreted as contributions to that programme, though Ciano definitely denied that his visit to Berlin in October was for any such purpose.

Mussolini's formal abstention from war at the side of Germany could thus bear the interpretation of being the counterpart to the Allies' practical abstention from vigorous war at the side of Poland. The counterpart to the Allies' blockade of Germany would then be an Italian effort to assist Germany to withstand the blockade. Since the Allies were in a good position to frustrate that effort, Mussolini had every motive for rousing hope among the Allies that his whole conduct was really on another pattern, tending towards detachment from Germany. In doing

so, however, he ran the double danger of letting Germany suspect that this was his true intention, and of allowing the Italian nation, which overwhelmingly desired such a detachment, to form a public opinion in favour of it which would later be too strong to be overridden. Hence throughout the period of Italy's non-belligerency the signals of two different policies were hoisted in Rome alternately or simultaneously. Nor need it be supposed that Mussolini, so long as the military prospects appeared ambiguous, had entirely made up his mind to follow at all costs a predetermined policy of total co-operation with Hitler. From the opening of the war until the Brenner meeting between the Dictators, a current in Italy favourable to the Allies was tolerated : venomless, if not sympathetic, descriptions of the Allies' conduct of the war could be printed ; implicit, though not explicit, confession of differences between the German and the Italian outlook in Europe appeared here and there in speeches and in authoritative articles ; behind the scenes, or even in a certain penumbra of publicity, important Italian personages were allowed to plan for collaboration with the Allies in various fields. It will not be supposed that Mussolini, using these manifestations as a mask for his impending participation in the war, ruled out all thought of using them as a means of transition to a different policy should he become persuaded that he could safely and advantageously follow a different policy. It was when he became persuaded—at the moment of the successful German swoop on Scandinavia, and of the British interception of German coal supplies to Italy—that he had more to fear and to hope from Germany, and little chance of a grandiose and one-sided deal with the Allies, that Mussolini liquidated, one by one, his possible means of approach to the latter, until he maintained in being only a residue of paradoxical obligingnesses and courtesy with which to weaken the power of decision of his chosen enemies.

It was not only to the common people in Italy, profoundly anxious for peace, that the standing aloof of Italy from the hostilities of September 1939, following so closely upon Germany's disconcerting embrace with Russia, seemed to betoken an overthrow by Mussolini of the Axis policy itself. To those in England who believed that the Fascism of 1939, and its Duce, could easily recapture the attitudes of 1922, it seemed that the possibilities of such a fundamental change were present. In 1922 Fascism had made itself the vehicle of a new internal discipline which the Crown, the Church, and the big economic interests desired as a means to end the threat of social disruption which had overhung them since 1917. In

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1939 Crown, Church, and big economic interests were undoubtedly (it seemed) united in desiring abandonment of the Axis. A great majority of the common people were similarly minded; and what prevented Mussolini from making himself the mouthpiece of Crown, Church, economic interests, and common people? Such abandonment of the Axis would have outraged Germany, but it seemed within Mussolini's power to arrange a defensive collaboration with Germany's enemies and even to name some of his own conditions for doing so. Neutrals, throughout the world, would have approved and sympathized, and from the approval of the U.S.A. there would have flowed great economic benefits to Italy. The scheme implied, however, one formidable condition. It would have been necessary to entrust the practical conduct of the detailed affairs of the State and of the nation to people ready and able to negotiate in a spirit of conciliation and of adaption to the more than national interests of a community of nations. It would have been necessary to credit the other countries with a capacity to handle their own affairs and to prosper, without revolutionizing their institutions to suit Italian prescriptions. In a word, it would have been necessary to reverse the direction in which, for five years intensively, and for a much longer period more spasmodically, Mussolini had been driving the Italian nation on the plea of realizing the full postulates of Fascism. To bring Mussolini to such an heroic decision there would have been need for a prodigious display of energy and determination among those with whom he would be invited to collaborate in the future. It may be suspected that those in England, and in France, who indulged in expectations of the heroic decision from Mussolini, either failed to understand the need for this prodigious display, or took it for granted that the British declaration of war would bring with it an immediate display, on the British side, of the required dimensions. There was, however, nothing in the British conduct of the war in those months to give Mussolini the sense of terrible strength and terrific energy, and the story of British policy towards Italy in the first eight months of this war is that of an attempt to mollify an ill-wisher, whose rancours were finding satisfaction in an attitude of fundamental hostility, by manifestations of goodwill and of munificence in non-controversial matters. A different policy, that of forcing Mussolini to define his position and to take the consequences of it if it should prove ultimately unsatisfactory, was scarcely given open expression, though there were known advocates of it; and every hint of such thoughts on the British side was excitedly pursued and exploited on the Italian side.

Yet another policy—that of seeking a fundamental political agreement with Italy—was attempted only when Mussolini's intervention against Britain was all but a foregone conclusion.

#### NON-BELLIGERENCE AND BRITISH POLICY

The British policy of attempted conciliation on non-controversial grounds was, in its essence, a silent and unspectacular policy. Public manifestations of it did not go beyond such innocuous approaches as a show of cordiality towards Signor Bastianini, who succeeded Count Grandi as Ambassador in the first days of the war, and towards Count Grandi himself (at a distance, for he omitted to return to London from a holiday in Italy to take leave of his post); and the inauguration of British Institutes in Rome and Palermo by our Ambassador, Sir Percy Loraine. Meanwhile, there departed from London for Rome various business men with Italian connexions; and in London there arrived Italian business men who, according to the nature of the Italian régime, could not but be semi-official personages. Side by side with these visiting magnates who made ready for the execution of industrial and commercial orders, the Government experts in the finance of Clearing Agreements moved, at first entirely behind the scenes, but later with some accompaniment of newspaper comment.

The treatment given to Italy in the matter of stoppage of ships and examination of cargoes was such as to call forth in the first months of the war American complaints of British favouritism to Italy. During this period, in fact, what with British solicitude for the commercial well-being of Italy and Italian desire to keep the world under-informed about Italian feelings and intentions, the Italian Press passed under silence the exercise of belligerent rights over Italian shipping by the British Navy. The vicissitudes of the commercial negotiations were passed under a similar silence on both sides, at least until early March, when the British Government withdrew a favour which had been tacitly accorded to Italy: the liberty to fetch German coal without hindrance by the sea route from Rotterdam even after the British blockade had been extended to exports from, as well as imports into, Germany. Mr. Ronald Cross, Minister of Economic Warfare, gave the signal in an answer to a Parliamentary question on February 29th. The time for Italy to make arrangements about her coal supplies, he said, was running out. The most malignant of the Italian correspondents in London, who represented, among other papers, Count Ciano's *Telegrafo*, now brought into relation the questions

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of the general commercial discussions between Britain and Italy, and that of the stoppage of German coal supplies. He argued that the coal which Italy took from Germany was mined by Italian labour and carried in Italian bottoms and was thus not a German product within the meaning of the orders. As to Italy relying upon British coal, he wrote that if Great Britain refused to accept Italian agricultural products in payment for coal, and insisted on being paid with products of the Italian heavy industries, then those industries would come to find themselves under a damaging and unacceptable British control ; and Italy, as a non-belligerent, was not prepared to pass into any condition of dependence on Great Britain.

The *Daily Telegraph*, breaking silence on the British side, attributed to Mussolini's personal intervention the breakdown of the whole project of Anglo-Italian economic co-operation, and the London Correspondent of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, reporting this intervention by Mussolini as a fact, gave this balanced account of the event :

"The British negotiators tried to initiate a trade expansion on the basis of clearing arrangements. England was prepared, on this basis, to purchase Italian goods, such as vegetables and fruit, though these must in wartime rank as something of a luxury. Besides this, concrete suggestions were repeatedly made for the increase of British coal supplies to Italy to offset in part the interrupted seaborne supplies of German coal. But England demanded, as a counterpart, larger supplies of Italian heavy and engineering goods. . . . Another suggestion was that the Italian shipyards should work to provide merchant shipping for Britain."

The Swiss Correspondent then quoted the story of Mussolini's intervention to prevent any expansion in the shipping of Italian heavy products or the like to Great Britain :

"The background of the decision is not known in London," he wrote, "but it is supposed that the Italians fear that the export of these goods might interfere with Italy's own military preparations and programme of self-sufficiency. In any case, it is supposed that political considerations of the effect of such deliveries on Italy's relations with Germany must have played a part. There was also a financial difficulty. Italy could hardly pay for the increased raw material imports needed for execution of the export orders without getting credits, and considerations of war finance and of psychology make the granting of credits in London difficult for the time being."

The seizure of Italian ships carrying German coal began in the first week of March. Some of the first ships to be seized were, however, released and allowed to proceed to Italy. This was at the moment of Ribbentrop's visit to Rome on which followed, on March 17th, a colloquy of Mussolini with Hitler in the Brenner Pass. The German-Italian conversations, which occurred during the second visit to Rome of Sumner Welles, President Roosevelt's special envoy, were an ominous but not a conclusive index to Mussolini's intentions, and the British Government decided to make another attempt at commercial negotiations.

Italian protests against the British exercise of the right of searching Italian shipping became louder and more public. In an official note on the coal question, the Italian Government described the British control as "often vexatious" and particularly denounced the violation of postal secrecy. The British Government replied that its conduct was in line with Italian War Law, and contrasted it with the German policy, which involved the destruction of innocent vessels with their cargoes and passengers. In conclusion, the British Government declared its continued resolve to have the greatest measure of regard for Italian and other neutral interests that would be compatible with prosecution of the war. The reference to German treatment of neutrals gained point from the experiences of the *Faniona*, the *Grazia*, and other Italian merchant ships, which from November onwards were the victims of German attacks without warning on the high seas.

The Italian Press still refrained from venting specific grievances against the British contraband control. These, it was understood, were brought forward by the Italian Ambassador in a visit to Lord Halifax on April 26th, when (according to the Press) he raised the question of Italian vessels suffering detention at Malta and Gibraltar. But, in general comments about the war, the argument of Italy's refusal to tolerate the control was brought forward in terms of increasing bitterness with the added point that events in Norway (said the Italians) disproved the British claim to exercise an efficient command of the seas even close to Britain. A British Minister's remarks upon this Press campaign, launched on the morrow of the German assault on Scandinavia (and rendered more bitter to the British public by its own ignorance at that time of the real course of events in Norway), simply provided the text for further recriminations. Mr. Ronald Cross, speaking at Sheffield on April 17th, said that the British Government had no reason to suppose that Italy wished to be treated in any other way than as a neutral. If that was so, Great Britain

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must ask her to behave as one. Whereas, said Mr. Cross, in recent times the Italian Press had adopted towards Great Britain what can fairly be described as a hostile attitude. . . . "We have no quarrel with Italy. We have every wish to be friends. But we are plain-speaking people, and we should like to know where we stand with Italy."

This speech Gayda now termed "singular." Italy, he said, had nothing to learn from anybody about how to conduct herself, and would accept no warning from anybody. The *Popolo d'Italia* at this point declared :

"A great people like ours, which stands in the centre of history, and in the midst of the belligerent zones, cannot for always fold its arms without finally reducing itself to the mediocre destiny of every peacemaker who ends by getting blows from right and left. . . . A great people like ours cannot permanently consent to be watched and controlled in its own home : now it is forbidden to go from Massawa to Trieste, that is from Italy to Italy, without being subjected to the brutalities and hatefulness of the blockade. . . . There are no great nations without access to the oceans. . . . One must not nurture rancour against the destiny which has decreed for one generation the mission of iron and fire."

Balbo's organ, the *Corriere Padano*, stated that Italy's future attitude towards the war would be governed by the blockade exercised by Great Britain in the Mediterranean. The practice of non-belligerents and neutrals had its limits. Italy was a nation too proud and independent to stand the odious obstacles placed by the blockade in the way of her commerce. The *Stampa* declared that Italy's daily life was "tied by cords measured out by former sanctionists."

Even now the British Government had not come to the end of its attempts to improve things through economic negotiations, though the new Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, at once set about a more direct approach. The Master of the Rolls, Sir Wilfred Greene, who as an ex-combatant on the Italian front and an eminent friend of Italy had already served the Government in these transactions, made a last return to Rome to attempt to find the terms of an agreement with Italy about contraband. The Italian official world remained inscrutably polite, but by this time the British negotiators had ceased to expect anything more than suave acquiescence in economic proposals subject to a confirmation from high political quarters which never came. On May 31st the Italian Government announced that it had broken off discussions with the British

Government about contraband control, and two days later it broke off discussions with the French Government which were apparently close upon conclusion. The French, from the beginning of the war, had conducted their negotiations quite separately from the British, but if the French had been making no vain attempt to accomplish political ends through an economic agreement, neither did they bring to the joint cause of the Allies any alternative and constructive policy towards Italy.

The economic negotiations had an epilogue in the *Pietromarchi Report*, a document distributed to the Italian Press a week or two before Mussolini's declaration of war. In this were enumerated the stoppages of ships and interferences with traffic allegedly suffered by Italy at the hands of belligerent Britain. More important than the text were the headlines with which the Italian Press proclaimed that Italy had been and was being strangled by Britain in the Mediterranean. For upon this complaint, which no doubt gained credence among numbers of Italian people of all classes, was based the only current of popular sentiment in favour of the war in Italy.

#### ITALY AND THE VATICAN

Nowhere in the Italian peninsula was Mussolini's decision to remain aloof from Germany's Polish war more welcome than in the Vatican City. The Vatican manifested its sympathy for Poland in allocutions, wireless talks, and Papal audiences for Polish notables and refugees. The Russian invasion of Eastern Poland gave occasion to the spokesman of the church for yet more unsparing denunciations, and with these the Fascist régime was able to sympathize more freely and openly. The Russian attack on Finland called forth a more distant interest in the Vatican, but gave the Fascist Press motive for unbridled attacks on Russia. With these topics available for agreement, the Governments of the Italian State and of the Roman Church appeared to draw nearer to each other. At Christmastide (1939) King Victor Emmanuel, with Count Ciano, paid a State visit to the Vatican; Pius XII returned the visit a few days later, and on this occasion he invoked divine protection for the Royal family and the Italian Government "in order that the peace which, safeguarded by the wisdom of the rulers, makes Italy great, strong, and respected before the world may become for the peoples which today are fighting . . . a spur and an incitement to future understanding."

In many quarters in Italy and abroad, the Vatican was looked to as a possible link between the Italian Government and the United States

Administration, especially when the President appointed Mr. Myron Taylor to be his special envoy at the Vatican, and when Mr. Taylor travelled to Europe in company with the American "ambassador at large," Mr. Sumner Welles.

At the moment when the exchange of visits between Pope and King marked a harmony between the purposes of the Roman Church and those of the Italian State, the Pope delivered a Christmas allocution to the College of Cardinals. In this he combined with a general appeal for the re-ordering of the world on principles of justice and charity, a special plea for the safeguarding of the observance of treaties by juridical institutions. The Pope's words were clear in their denunciation of Russia, but a secondary denunciation of Nazi Germany was plainly apparent.

The Pope's attitude was for the time being in overt conflict only with the utterances of the extreme racialists and Hitler-devotees among the Fascists. A clear dissension between the Vatican and the more representative Fascists arose only when Germany put her diplomatic energy into assisting in the composition of the quarrel between Russia and Finland. The Fascist Press from this time (the beginning of March) regarded any further spurring on of the Finns as directed against Germany. Asseverations that Italy could never tolerate a Russian advance into the Balkans ceased to appear in the Press ; it was hinted that Germany, having assisted the Russians to peace with Finland, had now the certainty that Russia would attempt no such advance. On March 11th Ribbentrop had an audience with the Pope. In the course of this he was supposed to have endeavoured, without any success, to persuade the Pope that National Socialist and German policy was compatible with the principles of the Roman Church.

With the elimination of a "Russian danger in the Balkans" from the acknowledged reckonings of the Italian Government there disappeared its community of interest with the Government of the Roman Church. For the Vatican, Communist Russia remained the redoubtable ultimate enemy. Closer relations of Germany with Russia heightened the churchmen's suspicion of Germany, and estranged them from the ringleaders in Italy of the movement for complete fusion of Italian and German policy.

The *Osservatore Romano*, the daily paper published in Vatican territory (and in a modified degree also the provincial clerical newspapers), became increasingly differentiated from the Italian Press at large. The *Osserva-*

*tore* found its sales doubled and redoubled. The Fascist extremists detected in the clericals and in their Press a rallying centre for opposition to the ever more probable slide of Italy into the war. Angry threats were uttered against readers of the *Osservatore*; copies were seized and burned in the streets, and the editor, Count della Torre, insulted and menaced. In the last days of Italian non-belligerence the Vatican, faced by a threat that the Italian police would wholly ban the sale and circulation of the *Osservatore*, consented to the elimination from its pages of all political comment and news, except war communiqués. The Italian Press, meantime, was ever more tightly closed to general news or views of Vatican inspiration; and when the Pope sent messages of sympathy and encouragement to the Sovereigns of invaded Belgium and Holland, not a paper recorded the fact.

When Pius XII, in those last weeks before Italy's entry into the war, appeared at religious functions at Saint Peter's or in one of the basilicas, crowds of worshippers greeted him with shouts of "Long live Peace!" The prayer was frustrated, and with Italy's entry into the war the Pope and his counsellors retired into an attitude of deep reserve. The Vatican radio station, however, has not ceased to recall in many languages the Pope's pity for the invaded and terrorized countries of Europe, and his desire for a peace settlement to be made secure by good faith and the observance of treaties.

An echo of earlier controversies resounded in Rome in the late autumn when Suñer, the Spanish Foreign Minister, close associate of the Italian devotees of Hitler, spent some days in Rome and ostentatiously omitted the customary request for an audience with the Sovereign Pontiff.

#### ITALY, RUSSIA, AND EASTERN EUROPE

The Italian Press had praised the German-Russian conciliation as a brilliant stroke of Axis diplomacy, but remained sullen towards Russia, and incapable of so quickly transfiguring yesterday's "enemies of civilization" into fellow-totalitarians. Furthermore, German-Russian collaboration was steadily intensifying: it had achieved a sharing of spoils between Russia and Germany alone in Poland. What if this sharing should extend to Italy's field of alliances and of special interests?

Italy—the Italian diplomatists in London and elsewhere were saying—was "the greatest Balkan Power." Towards the Balkan nations, in the first weeks of the European war, Mussolini appeared studiously helpful and conciliatory. On September 20th, 1940, the Italian and Greek

Governments announced that they had respectively withdrawn troop concentrations to a certain distance from the Greco-Albanian frontier, and declared their feelings of mutual confidence. While Russian troops moved to positions on the (1939) Polish-Hungarian frontier, Hungary, Italy's sympathizer of recent years, drew close to Yugoslavia and even manifested conciliation towards Roumania, all this with much show of Italian approval. Italian publicists cried out loudly that Italy would never tolerate a Russian move across the Carpathians. In the height of this phase, in January of 1940, Ciano and Csaky, the Hungarian Foreign Minister, conferred in Venice. Italy appeared as the conciliator between Hungary and Roumania ; it was proclaimed that in face of the Russian menace territorial claims between the threatened States had lost significance. The Italian policy of maintaining the *status quo* in the Balkans, lest its disturbance should mean a partnership of Germany and Russia with complete exclusion of Italian influence, fitted in so tolerably with the British policy of saving the Balkans from German suzerainty, that a British-Italian alignment seemed possible to some.

But if the Italian Press appeared to treat the Russians as Public Enemy No. 1 ("Models of gross bestiality" Balbo's organ called them ; and Ansaldo wove complex interpretations of their sub-human, mechanized psychology), it was notable that Count Ciano had not let himself drop any word against them in his exposition of policy. Nor did Italian aid to Finland, save for an obscure and frustrated attempt to ship a few aeroplanes across Germany, get beyond vociferation and abuse of England and France for failing to act as policemen in the Baltic.

Italian journalists, kept ignorant of the purposes of Mussolini's high policy, were inclined, on hearing of the meeting of the Axis Dictators in the Brenner Pass on March 17th, to read into it some connexion with the efforts of Mr. Sumner Welles, who was at that moment in Rome, having visited all the belligerent capitals on his tour. But the Brenner meeting, which brought no move in the direction of peace, put an end to any hint of action by Italy against Russia in the Balkans. Hitler had supported Russia's imposition of terms upon Finland ; he claimed authority to conduct equally the policy of the Axis in regard to Russia in the Balkans. And this was the end of a phase in which Italy had appeared to be holding in reserve an independent policy of establishing her own hegemony in the Balkans.

In the Fascist view, if this leadership were to be established, and if it were to be accommodated to peaceful relations with England and France,

there could be no room for the special relations of Turkey with the two Western Powers. The Treaty of the Western Powers with Turkey in its first form had been a reply to Italy's occupation of Albania ; in its later amplifications, a warning to Italy against coming actively into the war, and at the same time a reminder and partial survival of the community of interests of England and Russia in face of resurgent Germany. In Fascist circles, therefore, the Turkish association with the Entente Powers (particularly when exemplified by an actual cession, on the part of France, of the mandated Syrian district of Alexandretta to the Turks), was held to be incompatible with a revision of Italian Mediterranean policy in consequence of the deflection of German policy towards an ever closer association with Russia.

#### FROM NON-BELLIGERENCE TO PRE-BELLIGERENCE

From every Fascist speaker and writer there has been exacted since the régime attained the plenitude of its powers a certain standard of enthusiastic advocacy of its current phases of policy ; but side by side with the standard Fascists there were always super-Fascists for whom the régime could never act swiftly or ruthlessly enough. Pre-eminent among these, at many stages, was Roberto Farinacci, one-time Socialist railway clerk of Cremona ; Secretary of the Fascist Party during the terroristic period of 1924-6 ; thereafter wealthy lawyer, newspaper proprietor, and "Minister of State" available for odd political jobs. About 1938 Farinacci, long in eclipse, re-emerged into publicity. He had for some years conducted in his provincial daily a campaign against the Jews, with the support of a sensational Rome midday paper, the *Tevere*. Suddenly, in the summer of 1938, the anti-Jewish policy was adopted as a policy of State. Farinacci, who had taken to touring Germany and visiting Streicher and other anti-Semitic notables, was no longer a fanatical freak but a spokesman of the realities of to-morrow. Less prominent but scarcely less strident than Farinacci, a small school of ultra-Fascist journalists who had their recognized places even in the staider newspapers sustained an unchanging note of imprecation against Great Britain and France throughout the vicissitudes of non-belligerency. The *Popolo d'Italia*, the family paper of the Mussolinis, was only less violent, and the *Lavoro Fascista*, organ of the Fascist syndicalists, was on much the same tone. Other papers seemed to wear the prescribed embroidery of anti-British sentiment less easily, allowing an under-surface of detachment and scepticism to appear ; while Balbo's news-

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paper differed by its extraordinarily vehement tirades against Moscow. The papers under ecclesiastical influence (not to mention the *Osservatore Romano* published within the Vatican walls) came near to an attitude of true neutrality, showing equal aversion for Germans and for Allies. The attitude of the Italian Press taken all round was, however, entirely incompatible with the breach between Italy and Germany which Italy's abstention from hostilities at first might have seemed to betoken. So long as this interpretation held the ground, special explanations were sought for the continuance in the Press of its vehement pro-Germanism. At first it was said that an appearance of continuity had to be kept up for dignity's sake ; later, that a particular clique were dominating the Press against the will of Ciano, if not of Mussolini himself.

A "Changing of the Guard" promulgated by Mussolini at the end of October 1939 was read as a step towards elimination of this clique. Starace, the Party Secretary, a martinet who had rejoiced in subjecting Italian people to Prussian barrack discipline, resigned in favour of Ettore Muti, an almost non-political daredevil, and Alfieri, Minister of Propaganda, and direct controller of the Press, was replaced by Pavolini, a journalist. The Chiefs of Staff of the Army and of the Air, Generals Pariani and Valle, also resigned, and four other Ministers. By no means all the shelved Ministers could be described as ultra-Fascists or pro-Germans (least of all the retiring Minister for Exchanges, Guarneri), nor could the newcomers by any means be described as notable friends of Britain. The new Minister of Propaganda handled the Press just as Alfieri had done, and Muti, as Fascist Secretary, made important changes in the administration of the party, but not in the direction of abating its pro-Germanism. The process was rather one of eliminating officials who had gathered a following for themselves, local or sectional, and of replacing them by inexperienced yes-men.

Instead of a motto reflecting any desire for improved relations with the non-German world, or any intention to profit by the economic opportunities of non-belligerence, Muti uttered the slogan, "Italy's line is anti-democratic, anti-Bolshevik, anti-bourgeois." At the moment of most intense hostility against Russia, hostility against Britain and France (none other, except the U.S.A. and the Northern neutrals, could possibly be described as democratic and bourgeois) was placed on the same plane. By early March, when the Russians had succeeded in imposing a victor's peace upon Finland, the anti-Bolshevik note itself was being hastily softened, but the anti-British and anti-French note was at least fully

sustained. Italian visitors to Britain of some eminence, heads of great industrial firms, and newly appointed Attachés at the Italian Embassy continued to scatter assurances that this public manifestation of hostility to Britain was a sop to Germany, and was otherwise meaningless, and they continued to utter hopes which they no doubt entertained as sincerely as their British listeners—hopes of a healing of the political rift by an economic accord. But the economic accord was no nearer in March than in September, and the political rift was not a whit less absolute. An official speaker in the Italian Senate complacently described the attitude of Italy as having passed to “pre-belligerence.”

The First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Winston Churchill, had alone sought, in some of his speeches, to rouse a response in Italy by openly referring to the political problem of Anglo-Italian relations. Broadcasting on October 1st, 1939, Mr. Churchill stated that we in Britain could fully appreciate the reasons why that great and friendly nation, Italy, with whom we had never been at war, had not seen fit to enter the struggle. Six weeks later, still more confidently, he declared “Italy, which we had feared would be drawn from her historic partnership with Britain and France in the Mediterranean—a partnership which will become increasingly fruitful—has preserved a strict neutrality.” No public voice in Italy gave the faintest encouragement to Mr. Churchill in his hints at a possible positive co-operation. The Italians were unable to think of co-operation except in terms of political concessions for their own advantage; and British diplomacy, sooner than tackle the problem of an Anglo-Franco-Italian triangular deal, had elected to rely solely on the calming effect of a gentlemanly business conversation.

French diplomacy was not much more active. A few days after the beginning of the war the French Government, reassured by Italy's declaration of non-belligerence, withdrew the orders which constituted the provinces on the Italian frontier as part of the war zone. Mediterranean France seemed far from any probable extension of hostilities, and the cities troubled themselves little with black-out or air-raid precautions. Meanwhile, between Italy and France, large business deals were concluded, and towns in the north of Italy were conscious of a prosperity due to French orders. The French, however, made no such grandiose attempts as did the British at a comprehensive economic agreement with Italy, but were content with day-to-day transactions. Until the launching of the German offensives in May and June France came notably second to Britain as a target of Fascist abuse and insult; travellers found

that ordinary Italians often regarded France as the country bearing the brunt of the war, and so more entitled than Great Britain to the respect of those not fighting. The French Government refrained from making any open attempt to improve its relations with Italy, although, as M. Reynaud revealed in the last days before the defeat, the French Government had made known, on several occasions before and during the war, that they would be ready to open discussions with Italy to find a friendly basis for an equitable settlement of all outstanding questions. On June 4th, M. Reynaud reiterated this offer, but still received no response. Despite these overtures, and despite the painful efforts to simplify French relations to Italy by silencing the Italian anti-Fascist exiles in France and by shutting off French polemics, the French Government can hardly be said to have developed a policy towards Italy during the months of non-belligerence.

Neither the British nor the French Government attempted, so far as the outside observer could see, to influence the opinion or to profit by the friendship of any group or class in Italy. Both believed that the Monarchy, the Church, the Army Chiefs, certain political figures in the Fascist Party, like Balbo, the majority of industrialists, and the whole of the country outside the Fascist Party were for peace, and some even for collaboration with the Allies. But it was hoped that Mussolini himself would come to stand for that policy, and the most anxious care was taken not to vex him either by an appeal in any other direction—excepting always the tacit appeal to the Italian appetite for prosperity—or by any pressure upon himself ; and the invitations launched by Mr. Churchill, before he became head of the Government, were apparently unrelated to the policy followed by those who were then in charge.

Mr. Churchill, on assuming office as Prime Minister, immediately tried to develop the policy which had hitherto been lacking. On May 16th, he addressed this note to Mussolini (secret at that time, but revealed by Mr. Churchill himself some months later) :

“ Now that I have taken up my office as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence I look back to our meetings in Rome and feel a desire to speak words of goodwill to you as chief of the Italian nation across what seems to be a swiftly widening gulf. Is it too late to stop a river of blood from flowing between the British and Italian peoples ? We can no doubt inflict grievous injuries upon one another and maul each other cruelly, and darken the Mediterranean with our strife. If you so decree it must be so ; but I

declare that I have never been the enemy of Italian greatness nor ever at heart the foe of the Italian law-giver. It is idle to predict the course of the great battles now raging in Europe, but I am sure that whatever may happen on the Continent, England will go on to the end, even quite alone, as we have done before, and I believe with some assurance that we shall be aided in increasing measure by the United States and indeed by all the Americas.

"I beg you to believe that it is in no spirit of weakness or of fear that I make this solemn appeal which will remain on record. Down the ages above all other calls comes the cry that the joint heirs of Latin and Christian civilization must not be ranged against one another in mortal strife. Hearken to it I beseech you in all honour and respect before the dread signal is given. It will never be given by us."

To which Mussolini replied :

"I reply to the message which you have sent me in order to tell you that you are certainly aware of grave reasons of a historical and contingent character which have ranged our two countries in opposite camps. Without going back very far in time I remind you of the initiative taken in 1935 by your Government to organize at Geneva sanctions against Italy engaged in securing for herself a small space in the African sun without causing the slightest injury to your interests and territories or those of others. I remind you also of the real and actual state of servitude in which Italy finds herself in her own sea. If it was to honour your signature that your Government declared war on Germany you will understand that the same sense of honour and of respect for engagements assumed in the Italian-German treaty guides Italian policy today and tomorrow in the face of any event whatsoever."

There could be no mistaking that this meant that Italy would intervene against the Allies when this should be convenient having regard to the respective positions of the combatants. The battles of Norway and Flanders had been fought ; there remained a hope that France would resist successfully on the Somme and that Mussolini would doubt the substantiality of the German victories. At that moment the Allies were too exhausted to attempt themselves to take the initiative and to face Mussolini with the choice of peace or war. They waited in growing and hopeless expectancy of war.

One other hope of the Allies lay, however, or had seemed to lie, in the great prestige and power of the United States. Italo-American relations had been far from cordial since the Italian assault on Abyssinia shocked

and displeased average Americans. The gradual connexion established between Italy and Japan, as joint associates of Germany, gave a more official cause of grievance on the American side. None the less the United States remained the home from home of many millions of people of Italian blood, the legendary land of hope for landless peasants, the most progressive and wealthiest country in the world, and an economic pillar of the Roman Catholic Church. President Roosevelt had on August 24th, 1939, addressed a fervent appeal to King Victor Emmanuel to assist in preserving the peace, and recalling the "common Christian ideals" of the two countries. Italy's abstention from the field of battle roused hopes in America that this appeal had been heard and respected.

The special envoy, Myron Taylor, appointed to represent the United States in the Vatican City, had the task of bringing the great political and economic prestige of the U.S.A. to the support of the diplomacy of the Roman Church in its efforts to restrict the war, in particular by keeping Italy away from the battlefield. Mr. Taylor commenced his mission in the company of the President's roaming Ambassador, Mr. Sumner Welles, who was honourably received on his two visits to Rome. In March, when the British Government intercepted German supplies of coal to Italy, it was still possible in Italy to envisage purchases of coal on credit from the United States.

By the mouth of Mr. Sumner Welles (or at all events at the time of his tour) Mussolini had even claimed credit for keeping 200 millions of dwellers in the Mediterranean out of the war, and had received from President Roosevelt a reply expressing sympathy, hope for a continuance of the same policy, and mild warnings for the contrary case. But the Italian endorsement of the German invasions of Scandinavia and the Low Countries showed that Mussolini was by now beyond the reach of proposals arising out of such universal considerations.

The President made an attempt at political mediation. He offered to Mussolini his services for the conveyance to France and Great Britain of "such specific indications of the desires of Italy to obtain readjustments . . . as the Chief of the Italian Government might desire to transmit through me." He proposed that if Italy would refrain from entering the war, then he, the President, would ask assurances from the other Powers concerned that they would faithfully execute any arrangement which they had reached, and that Italy's voice at the Peace Conference would be heard with as much respect as if Italy had fought the war. Mussolini neither accepted the proposal nor made a counter-proposal.

Instead, in the words of President Roosevelt : " On this tenth day of June, 1940, the hand that held the dagger has struck it into the back of its neighbour."

There had been repeated rumours of an instantaneous Italian intervention since May. The interruption, resumption, and renewed breaking off of commercial negotiations with the Allies ; emergency orders to shipping on both the Allied and the Italian side ; and open threats, alternating with subtle qualifications in the Italian Press, had kept observers in unquiet speculation as to how long the period of " pre-belligerence " had still to run. Count Ciano's summons of the British and French Ambassadors on June 10th, his curt announcement to them of Italy's entry into the war without further explanation save (to the French Ambassador) that the motive was that of fidelity to the German Alliance ; and Mussolini's declaration to the Italian people (" It is the hour of destiny ! To Arms ! ") came at last as a slight but sickening surprise. In Italy, the regimented acclamation of students and party members in every town barely concealed the dislike of the nation for the war thrust thus upon it. But then experienced observers had always predicted—even when the contingency seemed least likely—that Mussolini would feel strong enough to oppose his own authority against the most universal tide of adverse opinion, for a time.

#### THE SHORT WAR : ITALY *v.* FRANCE

Italy declared war on France as from midnight of June 10/11th. The war between the two countries lasted for only fourteen days, hostilities being stopped at 1.35 a.m. on June 25th. On June 15th the Italian Army reported that they had occupied some localities across the Alpine frontier ; on June 16th that they had taken prisoners ; on the 21st the Italians announced that a general attack had been launched from Mont Blanc to the sea ; on the 23rd the French communiqué claimed that on the whole front the French Army still held its advanced positions ; on the 24th the French claimed that in the Alps the enemy had nowhere breached the French line, but that in the Maurienne he had advanced a little way and on the Mediterranean coast had entered Mentone. In addition, on June 14th the French had claimed air-bombing successes against the Italians ; on June 16th the Italians claimed as much at the expense of the French.

The " war " terminated with an armistice, signed in Rome, on these

chief conditions : the Italians to hold their advanced lines in all theatres of war ; the French African territories adjoining Italian territory and Syria to remain demilitarized during the armistice, subject to inspection by Italian Armistice Commissions ; the French Navy to be brought back to home ports and there to be demilitarized. By the other terms France accepted in respect of Italy similar conditions to those imposed by Germany as to shipping, prisoners, aircraft, and wireless.

The Italian people, on whom moral condemnation from outside failed perhaps to make much impression, were overjoyed that the war against France had proved to be no war at all, but a formality by which Italy could take a post as one of the victors at an impending peace conference, since British capitulation could be taken for granted. A month after the armistice with France, Gayda wrote : "The fateful precipitous step towards final overthrow will be measured not by years or weeks . . . but by days or hours." Italy's part in this conclusive action against Great Britain (which would for that matter only be necessary if Britain failed at once to throw herself on the mercy of the victors) would be to hold troops and ships immobilized in the south.

If the Italian people, who had learned with great misgivings and without any enthusiasm of Mussolini's decision to drag them into war, were relieved beyond measure at discovering that there was to be no Franco-Italian war, they remained as unmoved by official attempts now to claim a glorious victory as they had been by foreign displays of moral indignation. Mussolini, who had caused the King to delegate to him the functions of Commander-in-Chief, visited the peaceful Alpine front, and the scene was filmed for exhibition around Italy, while journalists wrote up the story—no doubt true, but scarcely proportionate to the historic grandeur with which they tried to invest it—of the sufferings of the troops in their marches through Alpine snow.

The internal changes in France meanwhile caused Italy some preoccupation. The French régime was rapidly taking on the aspect of a totalitarian Government, with its State-controlled youth organizations, its controlled agricultural and autarchic economy, even its anti-Semitic laws. Such a French Government seemed to be qualifying for intimate relations with the real conqueror of France, and to be disclaiming all responsibility for the previous acts of French policy. The Italian Press therefore renewed, with great violence, its arguments for holding France as no less " guilty " than Britain ; repeated the claims to portions of France and the French Empire of which little had been said while France

was in arms ; and insisted upon the identity of "Vichy" France with the France of the Elysée and the Palais Bourbon.

The Armistice terms had brought no immediate territorial gains to Italy except the negligible "advanced positions" of the troops ; while the Italian Armistice Commissions were left to impose their desires in unconquered French territories. In some of those territories the French Governors and the local leaders swayed between allegiance to Vichy and attachment to the British Alliance. In French Somaliland, General Legentilhomme, on whose forces the Allies had relied for the defence also of British Somaliland, appeared to ignore the armistice. However, at the end of July there arrived a new civil Governor and a new Military Commander taking orders from Vichy. The Italian Armistice Commission was received by the French authorities, but was reported to have found it advisable to stay away from Jibuti and not to appear in uniform. In Syria the local population showed the greatest restiveness at the presence of the Italian Commission, the members of which, after some weeks, were reported to have been withdrawn by the Rome Government in impatience at their failure to get results. On the experiences of the Italian Armistice Commission in Tunis, either before or after the arrival there of General Weygand, all parties seem to have kept silence.

The Italians found no means of speeding up their cause in overseas France by pressure at Vichy. After the Armistice, indeed, relations between Italy and France were little more than a by-product of the respective relations with Germany. The comings and goings of Laval and of Marshal Pétain himself on errands of propitiation of Germany were not matched by similar intercourse between the Vichy statesmen and Rome, though Ciano was reported on one occasion to have had a meeting with Laval. Towards Vichy the Italian Press, throughout the five months of armistice which here come under review, continued to show a distant but acute sensitiveness harping on the punishment which France would have to suffer for having slighted Italy. She would not be allowed to escape by any device of pretended conversion to the Italo-German ideology.

#### THE LONG WAR : ITALY *v.* GREAT BRITAIN—AND GREECE

Other writers in this publication have dealt with the military and naval aspect of the war between Italy and Great Britain, fought on land and air over the north-east shoulder of Africa, at sea in the Eastern, Central, and Western Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and in the air also over the

metropolitan territory of Italy. The narrative here treats only of the political setting of the war.

Mussolini's non-belligerence on September 1st, 1939, was widely accounted for by the geographical and consequent strategical weakness of Italy and her recently gained Empire. The weaknesses of Italy herself lay in the exposure of the industrial north to air bombing from France and risks of a French invasion, in the targets offered by coastal communications on the western side to the Allied fleets holding Toulon and Bizerta, and in the opportunities enjoyed by the superior Anglo-French naval power of cutting off from Italy all ocean-borne traffic. The weaknesses of the Empire lay in its location across seas not dominated by the Italian Navy, an extreme weakness as regards the East African Empire and the Dodecanese, more moderate as regards Libya, only a potential weakness as regards Albania.

With France knocked out of the war these weaknesses were alleviated or partly eliminated. Invasion over the Alps and naval attacks on the Western Italian coasts could be ruled out : communications with Libya were much more secure. There remained the severance of Italy from the oceans and the isolation of East Africa, so long as the British Navy could control both ends of the Mediterranean ; and there remained the offensive power of the British fleet inside the Mediterranean, deprived, however, of the support of the French Navy and of the use of the French naval bases. There remained also what perhaps few Italians had reckoned with—the long-range bombing of the R.A.F., undeterred by the enemy conquest of France.

Between Britain and Italy the war opened with frontier skirmishing and air bombing on the various African fronts. In the course of three weeks the French defeat showed itself to be as absolute as on the Axis side could possibly have been hoped : a continuance of the struggle by the armies in North Africa and by the French Navy could now be discounted. Immediately this was clear, the British action against the French Navy at Oran showed the strength of the British will to make good the defection of France. The British action was carried out without a sign of Italian interference by air or by sea, and was the starting-point for a series of successful assertions of the unbroken power of the British Navy at either end of the Mediterranean. Both in this sea and in the Red Sea the Navy rapidly put the Italians in a position of inferiority, sinking or capturing a dozen submarines in the first days of war. On July 9th there were simultaneous sweeps through the Western and the

Eastern Mediterranean, the Italians seeking the protection of the Sicilian coast with the loss of a destroyer; and on July 19th an engagement between the cruisers *Sydney* and *Bartolomeo Colleoni* resulted in the sinking of this valuable Italian unit.

In the weeks while Britain awaited a German invasion, and stood up to the air attacks launched by Göring in preparation or substitution of that disappointed hope, Italy thus made no progress in working up a Southern front against the British Empire. The Italian public, vastly relieved that the defection of France had spared Italy an immediate assault by the enemy, looked now for Germany to finish off upon Britain the work begun upon France, and may have supposed that military strokes by Italy were withheld because they would have been superfluous. The Italian (whether in uniform or out of it) and his wife saw little of change in their lives in consequence of Italy being at war. In Rome, indeed, the works in preparation of the Universal Exhibition of 1942, designed by Mussolini as a triumphant close to twenty years of his personal power, were laid off; their continuance through the spring of 1940 had been ostentatious. But Italian cities experienced the nightly black-out and occasional alarms and raids, including a false alarm which set the anti-aircraft guns firing in Rome. But theatres gave their performances and social life continued; rationing of meat and of petrol was no novelty. The Italian Press, with columns of apocalyptic correspondence upon the impending end of Britain, dated from "somewhere on the Channel coast" or simply from Berlin, and with cartoons to show the British Navy and merchant fleet at the bottom of the sea and British land forces everywhere in flight, provided all the drama of war necessary for a nation of spectators.

However, one small and triumphant campaign of Italian arms was staged in July, when large forces operating from Italian East Africa occupied, in the course of a fortnight, the obscure and scantily peopled Red Sea territory of British Somaliland, from which British troops and stores were evacuated to Aden. This carrying of the Italian flag into British territory had its distinct value for an Italian propaganda intent upon advertising that the British Empire was on the point of disintegration.

The propaganda was addressed not only to the Italian people, but also, with all possible elaboration, to the Mohammedan world of the Middle East and of the Levant. As Britain's survival and persistence and will to victory in North Europe became daily more manifest, Italy was evidently

## ITALY ENTERS THE WAR

called upon to put forth in South Europe something more than the threat of an army and a navy "in being." In declaring war Mussolini had, it is true, bound himself to avoid involving in it those neighbours whose state of peace he had only a few months earlier, in a message to President Roosevelt, attributed as a credit to himself. "I solemnly declare," said Mussolini in his address to the people of Italy on June 10th, "that Italy does not intend to drag other peoples who are her neighbours into the conflict. Let Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Egypt, and Greece take note of these words of mine, for it will depend entirely upon them if they are confirmed or not."

Of these countries, Egypt was in a special situation owing to the presence of British forces in the country under the terms of alliance. Egypt, on Italy's entry into the war, broke off diplomatic and trade relations with Italy (as previously with Germany) but the two countries were not at war. The Italians, however, claimed the right to fight the British forces and their environment in Egypt, and launched air attacks not only on military outposts and harbours, but (in effect, at all events) on Egyptian streets in Alexandria. The Italian Army of Libya, its rear no longer menaced from Tunis, moved to forward positions in Cyrenaica, and during August and the first half of September, while the Germans developed their menaces against the British Isles and at the same time exercised an intense pressure on the Danubian States, the Italians held over the British Middle East the threat of a pounce from the west upon Egypt—to be combined, no doubt, with a thrust into Sudan (where Kassala soon, in fact, was abandoned to temporary Italian occupation). Yet by their delay in unleashing this action they called attention to its hazardous character, as though they were waiting for some outside event to diminish the strength of the British by sea and in the air, and in some opinions there had been a hope of synchronizing Italian action on the Egyptian front with an Axis land attack, across France and Spain, against Gibraltar.

But Spain held aloof from Axis plots in so far as Señor Suñer, though sojourning the whole of the last two weeks of September in Berlin and thence passing on to Rome, made no act of formal adherence to any alliance or agreement. It was without any political or strategic prelude that General Graziani gave the order to march forward from the Libyan frontier into Egyptian territory, where the British Army in a few days fell back towards the strongly fortified lines of Mersa Matruh. At the coastal fortress of Sidi-el-Barrani the advanced Italian forces halted and settled down to a give-and-take warfare between mechanized patrols. The

apparent menace to Egypt was progressively relieved (despite the approach of campaigning weather) as the British Navy and Air Force demonstrated their capacity to harass the enemy's rear and multiply his already formidable supply difficulties. By October the British fleet had accounted for twenty-two Italian submarines. On October 12th the fleet made an extensive sweep through the Eastern and Central Mediterranean, and once again came into contact with light Italian forces only. Not less did the British Air Force show its superiority in the Libyan skies. Marshal Graziani, the Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Libya, remained somewhat strangely in the background, and aloof from his army in the field. He had succeeded also to the post of Governor-General of Libya when Italo Balbo, the spirited and flamboyant head of the colony, met his death at Tobruk at the beginning of July in an air battle, as the Italians declared, but certainly not, as the British Air Force was able officially to announce, in combat with British pilots, since he was in a large observation machine, and no such was seen in the skies. Balbo had most certainly been the protagonist of an independent Italian policy. This may or may not have carried him to a position of outright protest against the war at Germany's side; if so, the protest was masked by a more than ordinarily bellicose attitude of his paper towards Britain. But certainly among the colonists and the Army of Libya Balbo inspired confidence and enthusiasm, and he was popular even with the Arabs. Marshal Graziani, on the contrary, had the reputation of a soldier of great energy and greater brutality. He was also Chief of Staff of the Army (under Marshal Badoglio, the Chief of Staff of the combined forces) and as such had duties in Rome.

Italy's active contribution to the Axis war had, all things considered, remained negligible—though the passive contribution, especially during non-belligerence, may have been considerable—when Mussolini on October 4th again travelled to meet Hitler at the Brenner. Not more negligible, however, than Italy's gains from Germany's victory over France and extending domination over the Balkans. By courtesy, indeed, Ciano continued to appear as the equal of Ribbentrop at the signature of pacts—be it the "Vienna award" of August 30th regulating relations between Hungary and Roumania (Italy had appeared in her own right as mediator, and to a very different purpose, seven months earlier), or be it the Three-Power Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan (September 27th) or later extensions of this to include Germany's Balkan vassals. But more and more, at this stage of the war, Mussolini relapses into the position of

one of Hitler's vassals. To flatter Italy's pride a show of equality is made even in economic matters, and the two Ministers of Economics, Funk and Riccardi, meet to promulgate a "joint" economic new order under the ægis of the country with coal and iron, and control of the resources of the conquered Continent, and the country without them. But with less regard for appearances Hitler, and he alone, visits Laval, General Franco, and Marshal Pétain, in the course of October, before turning up at Florence, on October 28th, for another colloquy with Mussolini—who, according to the Italian Press, had been present "in spirit" with Hitler and Franco.

This meeting of Mussolini with Hitler in Florence coincides with the launching, by Mussolini, of that attack against Greece which led to incessant disasters to Italian arms on three land fronts, on the water, and in the air. The war against Greece, towards which country, during non-belligerence, Italy had shown marked courtesy, and to which Mussolini had, on entering the war against Britain, extended solemn assurances—this aggression had been heralded by a most singular Press campaign and by some sinister incidents. In sudden concert, in the middle of August, the Italian Press discovered a Greek reign of terror in the province of Ciamura, adjoining Albania, exemplified in the murder (or execution) of an Albanian patriot (or bandit) some months before. In the midst of this a Greek warship engaged with flying flags on a ceremonial occasion was sunk by an "unknown" submarine while an Italian seaplane attacked two Greek destroyers. Gayda declared that a revision of Greece's frontier with Albania could not wait. Early in October considerable concentrations of Italian troops and tanks were brought close to the Greek frontier.

At 3 a.m. on October 28th the Italian Minister in Athens, Grazzi, at the end of a social reception, repaired to the house of General Metaxas and delivered an ultimatum expiring at 6 a.m. Greece was required to hand over to Albania certain strategic points. General Metaxas rejected the ultimatum and the Italian armies marched. Yet for five days Grazzi refused to ask for passports, remaining in the German legation and declaring that Italy and Greece were not at war. All Greek parties and classes rallied enthusiastically to the summons to war proclaimed by King George and the Government. A British military mission at once arrived in Athens, British aircraft took up their stations in Greek airports, and the British Navy hastened to secure the great island of Crete.

A great invasion, from Italy's Balkan foothold in Albania, had been



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launched across Greece, and the invading army, with overwhelming mechanized equipment, would thrust inexorably through to Salonica, severing Greece from Europe, pushing at the gates of Turkey, and sandwiching the whole Ægean between itself and the Italian island bases of the Dodecanese.

These plans most singularly miscarried, and after a few days' advance into coastal Greece the Italian armies were precipitately retreating, abandoning to the Greeks Koritsa, Santi Quaranta, Argyrokastro. Already, at the final date of this narrative, the Greeks held thousands of Italian prisoners. Far from gaining a strategic advantage, the Italians have, as it were, forced the British to take advantage of the air bases of Greece for intensive bombing of Southern Italy—and this at the very moment when Mussolini had at his own desire despatched Italian airmen to take part (with spectacular lack of success) in German air raids over London. On November 11th an Italian air squadron, making its way up the Thames Estuary to attack shipping, was virtually annihilated by British fighters. That same night the Fleet Air Arm in the Mediterranean struck home at Italian warships in Taranto with an effect that was to be felt for months after in the practical absence of an Italian Navy from the scene of action.

Six days later Mussolini, to celebrate the fifth anniversary of Sanctions, pronounced a speech proclaiming the perfect accord of Italy and Germany, applauded the "creative leader of Great Germany who has seen confirmed by victory his genius-like conception of strategy." Mussolini demanded an Axis peace, and declared : "We, the German and Italian block of 150 million men, resolute and compact, already have victory in our grasp." Farinacci, the energumene of Italian Nazism rather than Fascism—since Fascism has in its day displayed other aspects than those of a mere savage blood-cult—more cautiously demanded, on November 25th, that to avenge failures in Greece caused by "lack of foresight and military preparedness," Italy should prepare for a "terrific defeat of the enemy."

In plunging Italy into the war, Mussolini had shown the completest disregard of the views of the Italian people, who were driven to battle in order that the Fascist Dictator might continue in power, potentially buttressed by German bayonets ; and in order that the Fascist régime might be spared the alternative of a recantation of its rhetoric, its bluff, and its speculations. The Italian people, embodied in the Armed Forces, showed on its side a corresponding disregard for Mussolini's prestige. In

the first half-year of Italy's war neither Army, nor Navy, nor Air Force prosecuted the struggle with that energy which is born of faith in a cause. The tradition of those forces has been built up on the patriotism inspired by free and independent Italy. As this Italy has faded out of view, ousted by the idea of a Germanic Realm stretching from Norway to Sicily, with Rome as a subsidiary metropolis, it has become evident that the old traditions cannot be harnessed to the service of the new idea.

